

TRAIL RIDER NEWS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MONTANA TRAIL VEHICLE RIDERS ASSOCIATION

MTVRA's Annual Membership Meeting

Meeting Date: Saturday March 10, 2001
Meeting Place: Jorgenson's Restaurant *Big Sky Room*
Address: 1720 11th Avenue, Helena Mt.
Time: Annual Membership Meeting 1 p.m.

MTVRA's annual meeting will be held Saturday March 10, at Jorgenson's in Helena. The general membership meeting will begin at 1p.m. with several guest speakers scheduled.

A social hour at Jorgenson's will begin at 5p.m. with dinner to follow in the main dining room. We have assurances from the owner of Jorgenson's that the food will be delicious this year. They will be offering a menu selection that will include 5 entrees. During the legislative session it's difficult to find a place to hold meetings and have dinner in Helena so we hope we have the kinks worked out! *If you plan on attending the banquet please call Doug Abelin at 449-7353 by March 5 to make your reservation.*

Capitol Trail Vehicle Association will tentatively host a ride Sunday for all those interested! Please make a special effort to come and participate in this afternoon and evening of activities with other MTVRA members, bring your machines and plan to stay for a day of riding!

MTVRA Legal Defense Fund

Intervenor—"to come in as a third party to a suit, to protect one's own interests"

Why do we need dollars set aside for a legal defense fund?

Most of us are fully aware of the multitude of issues facing motorized recreation. For each issue there is a price to pay, be it time, personal involvement, public meetings or where it really hits everyone—the pocketbook. Results and decisions on issues statewide affect all of us, as precedents are set by those determinations. Unfortunately, in order to be effective, it has become only too appar-

ent that MTVRA has to be prepared to become involved as intervenors.

Many of you may remember the lawsuit concerning the Montana Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's) filed in 1996. Parties are still awaiting a decision from the court. Alone we did not have the resources to file as intervenors, so the Blue Ribbon Coalition stepped in and filed, listing eight other Montana groups as intervenors. The cost to them was in excess of \$20,000.

The funds received from Montana were \$3,008, leaving \$17,000 in the red. There were many people from around the West who jumped in and

bailed us out. **This is not the way to do business.** In today's world of closures and designation changes of our public lands, the prospects of appeals, lawsuits and filing as intervenors becomes more of a reality than ever before.

We must be prepared, it takes money and we need to start before we get to court. The Board of MTVRA voted to establish a Legal Defense Fund and are setting aside the \$4.00 insurance portion of the membership dues to start the fund. Since the insurance is no longer affordable, this small amount will be placed in the Legal Defense Fund from each membership paid. MTVRA sustaining clubs have been asked to contribute to the Fund, an amount separate from their \$100 club membership fee. The Legal Defense Fund needs everyone's support. Dig in your own pocket—ask your friends—ask other riders—ask business owners to help this fund grow. **Help keep our sport alive!**

MTVRA Electronic Network

By Jerry Levandowski

At the last board meeting we discussed the beginning of an electronic information network for MTVRA members. This is the beginning. I need names and e-mail addresses of MTVRA members who want to receive the information. The e-mail list will **NOT** be used for anything but MTVRA information to our members. It will **NOT** be sold or given to any other organization without the approval of the Board of Directors.

If you receive any information from other sources that you think it is important to MTVRA, send it to me and I will send it to our members. Hopefully this will not clutter up every one's e-mail boxes with the same info. from a host of different sources. **THIS WILL ONLY WORK IF ALL MEMBERS**

Continued on next page

Access-the never ending Battle

By Russ Ehnes, Executive Director NOHVCC

Maintaining access to our public lands seems to be a never-ending battle. With the recent election in Montana seemingly a rousing success for pro-access folks like me, many of us feel like it's a time for a long awaited breather. Afraid not! Just as they have done over the past decade, the anti-access groups will continue to seek out every nook and cranny in the law, every statute, regulation, every minute bit of text that can be manipulated or twisted into an interpretation or a loophole to keep us out of the mountains. Every conceivable challenge to OHV recreation will end up in the files of the courts. In fact, look for an increase in litigious actions from the Anti-Access groups. A pro-access Governor, President and representatives in Washington DC will be powerless to stop the enemies of OHV recreation when it comes to the courts and the increasing torrent of litigation. "All we want is for our laws to be upheld" is the credo of the anti-access movement. They have discovered that litigation is far more effective than conventional methods of dealing with agencies and our public lands. While the recent elections have proven that the idea of closing public lands is not very palatable to the average Montanan, they will proceed with zeal in the only avenue that offers any promise for their cause – the courts.

What should you and I be doing now? Not resting! It would have been tragic for OHV recreation if the opponents of OHV recreation had swept the elections. It will be even more tragic if OHV recreationists become complacent because of the sense of false security we may have from seemingly the friendly folks representing us in Helena and our nations capitol.

We need to build our legal defense funds for the forthcoming challenges. The fact

is that the anti-access folks are waiting for the political stars to align before they invest their time and effort in massive legislation. In the mean time they will be pursuing us in the courts. A strong legal defense fund will undoubtedly be a key element of our future survival. Join the MTVRA and Blue Ribbon Coalition. Contribute to MTVRA and BRC Legal Defense Funds. Join the AMA, ARRA, and your local club but don't think you can be complacent AND protect your right to ride.

We need to talk and write to our representatives, not just the friendly folks, and let them know how we feel about the places we ride and what is important to us. We may assume that our representatives know how important our favorite trails are to us but the fact is that they probably haven't heard of these places before. Let's start talking about the areas that mean the most to us by name. Conrad Burns is much more likely to try to protect the Tenderfoot Trail if he's heard about it from a dozen or more of his constituents.

We need to continue to build our relationships with agencies. Remember, the folks on the ground are professionals, and for the most part, trying to the right thing. We need to work closely with them to help them find solutions to the challenges that arise. All the republicans in the world won't keep your trail open if the agencies aren't willing to try to balance opportunities and protect resources.

The bottom line is that trail riding will always require a little extra effort beyond the maintenance in the garage. Do the extra work and you will be rewarded with continued opportunities. Ignore the work and you better start looking for a set of golf clubs.



Rimrock Trailrider Ride Dates / Areas

May 5th - Bentonite Hills, Northern Wyoming

This area outside of Lovell, Wyo. is definitely big bore country. If you like to climb hills (really BIG hills) this is the place to go. Lots of wide open space and fun riding for any size bike or skill level.

May 25 - 28 Memorial Day Weekend - Little Belt Mtns.

We are planning to camp at either Basin Campground or Johnson Park Campground. If you like classic trail riding in the woods, this one is for you. Lots of pine trees and creek crossings. Once in awhile you may even get to watch a friend play submarine with his dirt bike. Great riding and camping and fireside tales.

August 4th - Morrison Jeep Trail - Clark Canyon, WY

This is an unforgettable ride going up by switchback a very steep canyon wall (not super hard but just be careful) and then onto the Absarokee/ Beartooth Plateau and to the Top of the World Store. May go back to Clark or if street legal continue on and get picked up at the bottom of the Beartooth Highway in Red Lodge. If some things continue like they have been going this maybe one of the last times to take this ride.

We also have some other dates open in June and July and are looking at other areas of the state to ride. If you would like to show us your area give us a call or email.

For more info. call 406-628-8095
n9779w@yahoo.com
Rimrock Trailriders
P.O. Box 156 Laurel, MT. 59044.

MTVRA WEBSITE

www.mtvra.com

CHECK IT OUT!

MTVRA Electronic Network *continued*

PARTICIPATE. Send your info to INFOjl59405@aol.com.

It will have " **Subject: MTVRA info + subject matter** " to indicate this an MTVRA e-mail.

Classified Ads

Classified ads are available in the MTVRA newsletter for \$5 each. Please send your ad copy to MTVRA P.O. Box 2884, Great Falls, MT. 59403 or email Joyce gthompson@in-tch.com. Business ads are also available business card size for \$20.

Cold Weather Riding Gear Secrets

By Russ Ehnes, NOHVCC Executive Director

There are no guarantees when it comes to the weather in Montana. A nice summer ride can quickly turn to suffering with a summer storm. There are also those of us who ride in seasons that fair-weather riders avoid. I am one of the dedicated few willing to brave sub-freezing temperatures for a trail ride. Over the past couple decades I've learned a few keys to staying warm when conditions are less than ideal. A recent rainy ride in Mexico put my tips to the test.

The First and most important lesson is that "dry equals warm." If the weather is wet there is no replacement for good rain gear. Good, lightweight rain gear is expensive but will pay for itself tenfold in comfort.

Second, to stay warm you need to keep the air-envelope between your outer waterproof layer and your skin from exchanging with cold air. In other words, a coat that seals air in around your neck, waist and wrists and has a tight zipper will keep you warm with less insulation under it than a drafty coat.

Third, layer with cotton, wool and/or Polar-Fleece. Nylon riding jerseys look great and keep you cool but don't help when the weather turns cold. Cotton jerseys do a much better job of keeping you comfortable in all conditions. Polar-Fleece is the absolute best at keeping you warm for it's weight when used in conjunction with a good rain jacket. I've been very comfortable in some really nasty places with a cotton jersey, a Polar-Fleece, and a good Gore-Tex shell.

Real "Gore-Tex" is worth the extra money! Most Gore-Tex-like breathable fabrics become Leak-Tex after an hour or so in the rain, especially at 60 mph on a dual sport bike. There are a couple of notable exceptions to the imposter fabric rule that do perform very well: Columbia Omni-Tech and Ultrex. Most others suck. Also make sure that the seams are sealed with tape on the inside of the garment regardless of the fabric brand.

The final tip is if your feet, hands, or face are cold it really doesn't matter how warm the rest of your body is – you are probably not having any fun. I almost always carry a very lightweight snowmobiling balaclava for my face. I use "Sealskins" socks in wet or cool

weather. They're basically Gore-Tex socks and they work incredibly well. I carry MSR Cold Pro glove but must admit that keeping my hands dry and warm has definitely been the biggest challenge. The only REAL answer is to install heated grips, which is practical on a dual sport or ATV but most trail bikes won't produce enough juice to run them. AeroStitch offers Gore-Tex glove covers that are a two finger "Vulcan" style gauntlet that I think will work well.

MTVRA Insurance Coverage

MTVRA previously carried medical/accident insurance that covered members with a \$5000 policy while participating in MTVRA sanctioned events. This coverage was made available to MTVRA through a policy issued to NOHVCC by Lloyds of London.

The cost to each member was a reasonable \$4, which was included in the membership fees. Unfortunately, NOHVCC no longer carries this policy. Similar coverage is available through another carrier direct to MTVRA with an estimated annual premium of \$2000/yr. This is a flat fee premium, not a per member charge as was the old policy. MTVRA memberships would have to increase three fold or our dues would need to increase substantially to cover the additional cost. This rise in cost makes the insurance unaffordable at this time. Due to this change, the Board of MTVRA voted to set aside the \$4 insurance portion of the membership dues and use it to help establish a much needed legal defense fund. *See Legal Defense Fund Page 1*

Bylaws to be Amended

At the Board of Directors meeting on January 17, Article II. Definitions, 2-A. with proposed amendment underlined:

2. A Chartered Club shall be defined as an organization of at least five (5) individuals who supports the purposes of MTVRA, meets one of the following conditions and has submitted appropriate information to the Board of Directors for approval and acceptance:
 - A. The Association club dues are paid in full for the current year. The organizations con-

duct is becoming of the Association and OHV recreation and its purpose includes promoting and preserving OHV recreation and was organized prior to January 1, 2001.

- B. An organization requiring mandatory MTVRA membership.



IMPORTANT HB 124 UPDATE

by Doug Abelin

MTVRA has spent many years developing an OHV program working with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP), the Federal Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, State and Federal Highway Departments, County, State and Federal enforcement agencies, and many County Governments. MTVRA has developed an OHV users program that is well accepted and beneficial to all parties involved and we intend to continue doing so for many years to come. However, the provisions within this bill appear to challenge the future growth and stability of our OHV program.

We have been earmarking funds through an OHV fee program for years. This program was reviewed just a couple of years ago and it was recommended that it continue. It was not legislated into the tax base in the beginning. OHV enthusiasts worked to create a system to collect monies to address much needed OHV programs. The separate fee generated by the purchase of \$5.00 OHV stickers is used 60% for administration and 40% for enforcement. The creation of this fee for these uses was voluntarily agreed to by the users at the beginning of the program.

These monies are what we have used to build the program and are what we use to qualify for both State and Federal Off Highway Gas Tax funds that are used in both of our Grants Programs.

The appropriate sections of HB-124 propose to place our Off-Highway Vehicle

program funds into the General Funds account instead of our earmarked account that is administered under Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

The current bill also proposes to cap credit for future registration increases to a growth rate of only 1.5% limit. Any OHV fees collected over and above the 1.5% growth rate would be kept and used in the General Funds Account. Our current growth is averaging between 8 to 20%. This demonstrates the popularity and growth of OHV recreation. The growth cap of 1.5% is not representative of the actual growth rate of OHV recreation. The loss of use of additional money produced by this growth would reduce the effectiveness of Safety and Trail programs that we need.

If any of our OHV fees are pulled into the General Fund, as this bill is presently written, it appears it will create a new tax for OHV users. We do not feel that this is appropriate. Governor Martz in her State of the State Message said "I want to be crystal clear. I promised the people of Montana that I would not support tax increases. I will keep my word. If the people of Montana want tax increases, I'll respect their decision made in voting booth -- but I will not sign a bill that contains a general tax increase. Period." We are asking the legislative committee to honor her request by removing our OHV fees from HB124 and keep them in the program that they were intended to be in.

We feel that our funding situation is different from the funding situation for all of the other programs funded under HB-124 bill.

Note: As of 2/8/01, HB 124 has been amended.

Please write and thank the committee for the time and consideration for resolving and amending HB 124. As complicated and time consuming as it was, we really appreciate their efforts.

Rep Bob Story- Park City

Rep John Esp- Big Timber jesp@mcn.net Rep Gary Branae Billings branae@earthlink.net Rep Jeff Mangan Great Falls jmangan@mountainpeaksinc.com Rep Ken Peterson Billings kenpete@mcn.net Rep Dave Wanzanried Missoula davewanz@montana.com Rep Eileen Carney Libby jecarney@libby.org Rep Karl Waitschies Peerless **Be respectful, we can win this thing. Get your friends to contact them too.** Write them at Rep _____ Montana Legislature P.O Box 201701 You can also email each of these committee members and follow the bill at: www.leg.state.mt.us call: 444-4800

Looking For A Few Good Men

By Russ Ehnes

Torture. To some the word conjures up thoughts of Colonel Klink blaring "vee haf vays of making you talk!" or Chuck Norris being lashed to a bamboo cage after being captured by drug smugglers in Columbia. Or it could be a record setting, three-week cold spell in November that started two days after I got a brand new motorcycle. Yep, that's what torture is to me all right. I've got new XR650R in the garage and it's too damned cold to ride, even for me, and I'm tougher than five ordinary guys! Waiting for the new dual sport parts was like salt in the wound. I peered out the office window every time I hear the slightest noise, waiting for the UPS truck like a first grader waits for his birthday.

TREAD LIGHTLY![®] ON PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LAND

I waited for the mighty brown behemoth to plow through the snow every day for a week and a half. The driver of the truck, who happens to be a guy I've known since grade school, figured out how desperate I was and made a game of it. He drove by a couple times in the morning each day, whether he had parts or not, just to watch me, my face pressed to the glass, contorted in agony as his taillights disappeared into the distance. When he did have a package for me, he would remind me that it is okay to tip a driver – before he opens the back of the truck. I made his house payment last month.

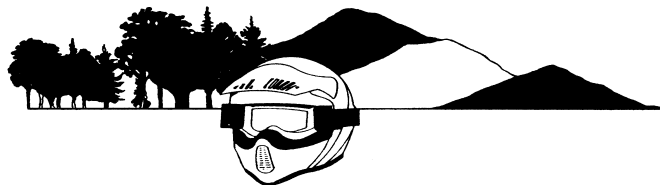
Finally, the parts arrived. Installing the

goodies kept me busy for a couple days. After that, the new bike just sat there, staring at me every time I walked by. It started talking to me the next week. Whispering at first "hey you, you wanna ride me, don't you." The next day it began speaking more frequently in a brash, taunting voice "hey you, yeah you, If you had any guts you'd be ridin' me in the snow, you loser!"

Well, we worked out a truce. I agreed to come up with some great ideas for spring rides and share them with my new bike and it would cut me some slack. I have a few pretty good ideas for a ride already. In fact it's there's a ride I've been thinking about for a about a year now that I have pretty well mapped out. It'll begin and end in Great Falls and will probably take place in August. It will be a four-day,

eight hundred mile ride that will traverse five mountain ranges, cross the continental divide twice and will no doubt cost over three hundred hard earned bucks but it will be a real kick in the pants. We will stay in nice motels, and eat good meals..

The marines are looking for "a few good men". I've modified that a bit. I'm looking for "a couple stupid men" who are willing to brave whatever elements we encounter, watch out for each other, have a great time and won't complain about the weather, the bikes, the expense, the long days, or the company. **If this ride sounds like something you're interested in, give me a call.**





MONTANA TRAIL VEHICLE RIDERS ASSOCIATION

Creating a positive future for off-highway vehicle recreation

Montana Trail Rider News is published by Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the MTVRA or its officers. Your editorial and/or news contributions would be appreciated. Mail to:
 Montana Trail Rider News
 PO Box 2884
 Great Falls, MT 59403

MTVRA 1999/2000

Current Officers, Board Members, Directors, Advisors, Committee Chairs:

Title	Name	Home Phone	e-mail	
President	Bob Stevenson	585-8252	bs051063@aol.com	Elected
Vice President	Joyce Thompson	388-1812	gthompson@in-tch.com	Elected
Secretary Treasurer	Mona Ehnes	452-5496	monaehnes@imt.net	Appointed

Board of Directors (Executive Board)

GT Falls Trail Bike Riders Assn	Jerry Levandowski	453-6861
Central MT Trail Users Assn.	Tom Swanz	423-5117
Capital Trail Vehicle Assn.	Doug Abelin	449-7573
Billings Motorcycle Club	Chuck Bonnett	256-9396
Rim Rock Trail Riders	Doug Poehls	628-8095
Ranch Riders	Marty Ulrich	365-5088
Gallatin Valley Dirt Riders	open (sustaining club)	
Russell Country Trail Conservation Assn.	Vic Shanks	761-2380
Mining City Trail Riders	Steve Ostenburg	494-4980
Big Sky Country Trail Preservers	Bonnie Secore	587-0323

Directors represent a chartered or sustaining club. Each club is entitled to **one** director.

A Chartered Club is club/assn. Requiring 100% membership in MTVRA. Sustaining club is organization paying \$100.00 dues yearly. Director from sustaining club must be a member of MTVRA.

Directors at Large

Mike Shuler	Great Falls
Kelly Lee	Bozeman
Roy Klau	Helena

A Director at Large is a member in good standing, elected to represent the general membership.

Please print

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone No. (_____) _____ (AMA# _____)

E-mail _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

MEMBER TYPE:

INDIVIDUAL \$ 22.00

FAMILY 36.00

BUSINESS 55.00

ORGANIZATION 100.00

Includes \$4.00 Individual, \$8.00 Family, \$15.00 business for the legal defense fund.

Donation to Legal fund _____

Total paid _____

Please make checks payable to:
MTVRA

How much do you remember from Civics 101?

By Linda Ellison

How a Bill becomes a Law: (Not necessarily the textbook version)

Bills must pass both "houses" or chambers to become law. Bills can be tracked by computer through various "reports" on the State Web Site.

First, they go through the development stage where they are assigned an LC number by the Legislative Council. This is the Legislature's legal staff-housed on the ground floor of the capitol.

Once they are "introduced" they are assigned a number: HB*** or SB*** to indicate the chamber they started in, then they are sent to committee to be "heard" or examined by the public and interested parties.

Hearing schedules are posted on the State Web Site and in most major newspapers at least 3 days prior to a bill's Hearing.

Those of you without computers, can also use the capitol "message line" to check the "status" of a bill.

The Number is 1-406-444-4800. When an operator answers, you simply say, "I would like to know the status of HB*** or SB***." You can probably inquire about two or three bills at a time, but don't call with a whole laundry list. Give other folks a chance. Make two or three calls if really necessary. Those phones are ringing all day long and the calls aren't that expensive.

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT

This is where the fun begins. 3 days is not much time to read the bill, determine its' impact, and strategize what needs to be said, by whom, and how. Hopefully, your officers, and Directors have been keeping pace, and monitoring the development of bills to this point. However, if you have Internet access and haven't gotten involved before, now is the time to do so. The more eyes, ears, and opinions we have, the better. 1800 Drafts have been requested so far this session.

When a "Bill Alert" comes your way, either by phone or "net" that means we need you to either call or write your "area" legislators, or specific committee members. Hopefully, we will have talking points and instructions for you to follow.

The process is quite simple:

To use the capitol message line 1(406) 444-4800 to reach a particular legislator, simply tell the operator when they answer, "I would like to leave a message for Representative*** or Senator***." The message is: "Please vote no on HB***," for example. Or, for a committee member you might say, "Please amend Bill Number*** to exclude OHV fees..." (or what ever the crisis of the day might be.)

Keep the message very simple - one or two thoughts.

Remember to leave your name and number so the Legislator can return your call if they so choose. (Many may not have time, so don't feel offended if they don't call back, but rest assured a pink slip will make it to their desk, with your message noted and they may want more information or clarification.) Try and get your friends and family to call as well. Remember, the name of the game is INFLUENCE!!

Don't worry about not having the answers if they do call you, simply say "I think Doug Abelin can fill you in on that, and his number is 449-7353."

They are more likely to call back if they know you, or if you are from their district- most recognize phone number prefixes from "home" but a stack of several "pink slips" even if they don't recognize the name is sometimes very hard to ignore.

REMEMBER: INFLUENCE, INFLUENCE, INFLUENCE.

A letter is even harder to ignore. Most of these folks understand the demands on your time and most will take notice! Tell them briefly who you are, describe your concern, and why the bill is a problem for you or our program, for example. **AND:** Don't forget to "ask for the sale" ..tell them what you would like them to do about it!!!

Address letters to:
Representative***
Montana House of Representatives
Capitol Station
Helena, MT 59620

(or)

Senator***
Montana Senate
Capitol Station
Helena, MT 59620

Better yet: show up for the Hearing and testify! (Follow the same instructions as above.) For example: you might begin, Mr (or) Madame Chairman and members of the committee, for the record, my name is*** (and go on from there!)

A roomful of people is the best signal we can send.

If it's really important and we put out a special call for "bodies" to appear, wear your colors - an MTVRA hat, or shirt - something to identify the group you're with, or the principle you're fighting for (or against)... Similarly colored name-tags that say, "Vote No (or Yes) HB/SB***." It's called "guerrilla theater" and it's VERY affective. You don't have to get up and say a word - some of us will be doing that for you - just be there. Keep it civil and respectful.

A good example is the "show and tell" day we are planning on February 2. Nametags all around - even hand printed that say MTVRA. Wander around, say Hi to those you know, or seek out those you don't and introduce yourself.

Whether calling, writing, or in person at a hearing, don't forget to say "Thank you!" or "Right on!" on behalf of a bill that you like the sound of - whatever the subject. These guys don't get much "good news!"

After a hearing, at the next committee meeting date or perhaps longer, but sometimes the same day a bill is "heard" if the committee chair senses members are already in agreement, the bill will go through "mark up" in "executive session". No further testimony is heard, but committee members may ask questions if bill principals are present, amendments may be presented and voted on, and the bill may be voted up or down immediately. A no vote kills the bill in committee. A vote to "table" essentially ends the process also, although maneuvering may give it another vote in the future. A yes vote sends the bill to the chamber floor and gives opponents or supporters another chance to influence

the system when the larger body votes as a whole. (Another opportunity to make phone calls, etc. to change people's minds.)

There are two chances for changes to be made. The 1st floor vote, "second reading" allows both sides to present their case in debate and for changes to be made. Third Reading at least one legislative day later, is a little like "going once, going twice" at an auction. No votes can succeed at either opportunity. If the Bill passes Third Reading, the process starts all over again in the opposite chamber with the bill being assigned to a committee, etc. and the same opportunities to **INFLUENCE** the process. The last resort is a Governor's veto. By the time a Bill has gotten that far the chances are dicey at best. Better to spend **INFLUENCE** early in the game!!

One last thing... Bills retain the same tracking number when they pass to the other chamber for consideration. A House Bill remains a house Bill even in a Senate Committee Hearing. Bills are consecutively numbered in both "houses" so there may be a SB 100 and a HB 100 up for consideration at the same time. They are totally different bills, so "Stay Awake" out there!!

BOTTOM LINE: "It does not require a majority to prevail, but rather an irate, tireless minority keen to set brushfires in people's minds..." Samuel Adams.

Navigating the State Legislative Forum

By Larry Ellison

This article is for those of you who have never logged onto the State Legislative Forum and for the old timers looking for an easy way around the site. We'll start by typing in the URL to get on the State Site Concise Reports.

http://data.opi.state.mt.us/bills/2001/REPORTS/cum_bill_dft_req.htm

This page is easy to use because everything you will need to get started is available here or can easily be "linked to" from here. The first column is the LC #. This # is assigned when a Legislator makes a request to the bill writing dept. for a bill draft. The far column gives a brief overview of what the bill will be about. This is a quick (??) and easy way to see what bills are in the

works, what they are about and where they are in the process. (There are a lot of screens full and a lot of links here.) As of Jan 22nd there are over 1700 requests for bill drafts. If the LC # is a different color, you can click on the # to load a copy of that bill draft.

If there is a # in the next column, it shows that the draft has become a "bill". HB is a House Bill, SB is a Senate Bill, HR is a House Resolution, HJ is a House Joint Resolution etc. SBs and HBs may be different from the "draft" version, and are what actually may become laws. Bills will usually be your primary concern. As bills are amended in committee, the new text will be made available here. You can click a # in this column to see the text of that bill.

The next column will take you to the status page for that bill. I usually go here first and there is a lot of information on these pages. If a draft has been canceled, then this particular item is dead. If the draft request is on hold, you'll need to keep checking the status to see what's happening. If there is a bill #, you will probably still want to check the status first and see where it is in the process. A bill that is tabled is usually dead, but sometimes can be resurrected. Keep an eye on it on its status page. A bill killed in committee is almost certainly dead. The Bill Action box shows all the steps the bill has been through so far and the date of each action and what the action was if appropriate. The most current action is at the top. A different colored item is an action that is coming up, such as a committee hearing. If "Hearing" is a different color, clicking on it will take you to the hearing schedule page for this bill. Here you will find out what committee will be hearing the bill, when and where. On this page if you click on the committee listed, you'll go to the page that lists all the committee members, who chairs it etc. In other words, who you should be contacting if this bill is of great interest to you and you want to see it passed, killed amended or what ever.

Once a bill is passed out of committee, it goes to the floor of that house for floor action, i.e. a vote by all the members of that house. The time to contact your local legislators about the bill is after it passes in committee.

The Status page also tells who the sponsor is, who the bill drafter is (the person that did all the typing and some bills are many pages long) and much more.

Finally, to see the text of a bill, click on the bill #. You can do this from the status page or from the Concise Reports page. A bill that has passed will have the vote count listed. Click on a # to see who voted for or against a bill.

Keep in mind that a bill has to pass both houses and be signed by the Governor to become law. If "YOUR" bill has passed one house, keep watching, because it will go through the same process in the other house. Conversely, if a bill you don't like slips through one house, you have 2nd chance to get it killed or amended in the other house committee or voted down on that house floor. However it is much more difficult to stop/change a bill in the 2nd house, especially if it passed handily in the first house.

If you always want to start from the "Concise reports" page, the easiest way to refind a bill of interest to you is to write down the LC #. The LC #s are in numerical order. The bill #s on this page are not, so are difficult to relocate from here.

If you want a more general place to start, go to;
[http://laws.leg.state.mt.us:8000/laws01/plsql/LAW0200W\\$.startup](http://laws.leg.state.mt.us:8000/laws01/plsql/LAW0200W$.startup)

This takes you to the State Legislature Home Page. From here you can link to other areas and other ways to get the same info as you find on the Concise Reports page.

If you want info on a specific bill, that is you know the bill #, use the following URL. From here you can enter the bill #, LC #, etc and be taken to its page.

[http://laws.leg.state.mt.us:8000/laws01/plsql/law0203w\\$.startup](http://laws.leg.state.mt.us:8000/laws01/plsql/law0203w$.startup)

Anyone that would like more info or help can e-mail me at le@in-tch.com

Ed. Note: Keep this informative information and keep up on legislation that affects motorized recreation.

MTVRA
P.O. Box 2884
Great Falls, MT 59403

MISSION STATEMENT

“To create a positive future for Montana off-highway vehicle recreation by creating an ongoing communications forum through which OHV enthusiasts and organizations can share information and experiences: participate in educational opportunities: build partnerships with land managers, land owners, and supporters: and become partners in protecting, promoting and creating a positive image of OHV recreation.”

“CREATING A POSITIVE IMAGE FOR OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE RECREATION”