



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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OFF-ROAD VEHICLES IN STATE FORESTS

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You asked if neighboring states (Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island) allow off-road vehicles in state forests and if so, whether they charge a permit fee.

SUMMARY

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has opened all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and off-highway motorcycle (OHM) trails in eight specified forests. DCR has instituted a trail riding permit program in three of these forests, but the permit is free. The goal of the permit program is to collect data on the number of trail users. More detail is provided below.

Rhode Island does not have any designated trails in state forests for off-road vehicles. However, state roads are open to legally registered motorcycles (including off-highway motorcycles) operated by riders who hold a valid motorcycle operator's license. Therefore, people can ride registered motorcycles on non-gated dirt roads that pass through state forests (R.I. Code R. 25-8-32:19). There is no permit fee to use these roads. Because ATVs cannot be legally registered, ATVs are not allowed on these roads, according to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management.

According to the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Lands and Forests, New York's forests are not open to off-road vehicles at this time.

MASSACHUSETTS

The Massachusetts DCR has opened ATV and OHM trails in the following forests:

- Beartown State Forest (ATV and OHM)
- F. Gilbert Hills State Forest (OHM only)
- Franklin State Forest (OHM only)
- Freetown State Forest (OHM only)
- October Mountain State Forest (ATV and OHM)
- Pittsfield State Forest (ATV and OHM)
- Tolland State Forest (OHM only)
- Wrentham State Forest (OHM only)

DCR has implemented a trail riding permit program for ATV and OHM use on designated trails at Beartown, October Mountain, and Pittsfield state forests. All ATV and OHM riders must obtain a free daily riding permit from DCR before using the trails. The program allows DCR to collect information about user demand, the popularity of motorized recreational trails, and rider demographics and usage patterns.

DCR issues a maximum of 50 permits per day for Pittsfield State Forest and 75 permits per day for October Mountain and Beartown state forests. It bases these limits on national safety standards for off-highway vehicle use per mile of available trail.

For more information about using off-road vehicles in Massachusetts, see <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/recreational-activities/off-road-vehicles.html> (last viewed October 21, 2013).

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