



Newsletter April 2011

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Presidents message

Through 2010 progress has continued to be made on the OF4WD advocacy work on issues/projects in the geographical areas where most of us wheel. However, repeating the same message as last year we really need to focus on expanding our work on the on the ground trail projects.

In the past we have helped spear head trail cleanups and trail clearing projects and last year we did try to partner with other motorized trail organizations on specific trail and bridge maintenance projects. Planning and coordinating this work and pooling resources make sense but unfortunately the ATV and snowmobile groups are reluctant to accept our help. We must not let this deter us though and in fact we should take this as a bit of warning sign. As the Ontario Trails Strategy will likely result in more opportunities for organizations to assume trail development and management responsibilities we want to ensure we have an equal standing and not potentially shut out by another group who happen to consider our use as incompatible. So, we really need to step up our game. We need to establish a track record of our own for trail stewardship. An important step we are taking this year is the launch of the OF4WD Adopt-a-Trail program.

The Adopt-a-Trail program has been launched on our web site and presented at our AGM. It has been well received and we have already had a number of clubs step forward and volunteer. It goes without saying that the success of the project depends on the work and commitment of you, the membership. See below for more details on the program.

Off roading opportunities on private land - I have mentioned the need to strike up trail/land agreements many times before. Whilst maintaining public land access is our primary mission, private land agreements facilitate more wheeling opportunities. It will potentially allow for greater scope for the type of trail available and the “managed venue” format will surely appeal to folks simply wanting an accessible and predictable days wheeling. Given the OF4WD ability to assist with insurance, organizing trail building capability etc. we are well placed to be able provide a very cost effective option for someone wishing to offer/open up their land. If you own some significant bush acreage then please give some consideration to this. Clearly, terms of operation would have to be acceptable to you the landowner. So, please come forward for a chat – no obligation. Also, if you aware of any potential opportunities that would be worth following up on then please let us know ?

Please note that future newsletters will be of a shorter format and issued quarterly.



AGM

The AGM was held at the Appleby Ice Centre in Burlington on March 27th.

We had a good turn out, a lot of good questions, comments and suggestions.

The seven open Director positions were taken by :

Kevin Adnitt – re-elected
Joe Algudady – elected
John Hosszu – elected
Carol Ann Leverton – re-elected
Chris Miles – elected
Chris Muir – elected
Brian Sibbles – elected

They will be joining the following directors who are entering year two of their two year term :

Ron McCallum
Duncan Robinson
Peter Wood

Club of the year award

At the AGM the Club of the year award was presented to BAJA.

They are new but very active club that have from the get go embraced the responsible off roading principles of the OF4WD.





Trails news

Haliburton seasonal opening of trails

During late 2010 the Minden MNR and the Haliburton Highlands Stewardship Council invited the presidents of the main motorized use groups who use trails in the area to a series of meetings.

The purpose of the meetings was to look at opportunities to reduce the environmental foot print of motorized use. The MNR were proposing a seasonal closure to June 1st. The conclusion from the assembled groups was that May 1st would be more reasonable.

ATTENTION
TO AVOID TRAIL
DAMAGE THIS
TRAIL SHOULD
NOT BE USED
BEFORE **MAY 1**



With the respect and support of



Most of you have probably already seen the announcement and signs posted on the home page of the OF4WD web site. If not please check out the following link :

[http://www.of4wd.com/pdf/press_release_Spring_Trail_Closure_FINAL\[1\].pdf](http://www.of4wd.com/pdf/press_release_Spring_Trail_Closure_FINAL[1].pdf)

This is an important milestone in building relationships with the other trail user groups. The hope is that we can work more closely together in future on trail maintenance projects that will ensure the long term sustainability of a multi use trail infrastructure in the area.

Bolger Lake/Ardbeg

Background : In early 2010 we received a call from a local newspaper asking for a response to concerns raised by the local cottage association (Magnetawan Pioneer Association) on Bolger Lake about 4 wheel drive vehicle use in the area. In particular “large tired” vehicles damaging the cottage access roads, vehicles being driven in to Black Lake, plus concerns about behaviour toward local residents.

The cottage association was calling for a closure of the access road and area to certain types of 4x4 vehicles. At the time, this was being looked at by the Municipality.



Given the importance of the area to the 4x4 community the OF4WD engaged in a very active campaign directed toward the Municipality of Whitestone, Parry Sound MNR and the cottage association. The net result being no ban was imposed and at a meeting in the MNR offices in Parry Sound an agreement was reached that the OF4WD and the Cottage Association would work together on stewardship activities through 2010. It quickly became apparent that this was a hollow agreement. In subsequent follow up with the cottage association our calls for a meeting were not responded to.

Update for mid 2010 to present :

No additional restrictions have been imposed by the MNR. Both the MNR and OPP have reported that they do not see sufficient problems to justify increased patrols in the area.

However, the cottage association continue to make waves over this issue and only a few weeks ago met with the MNR and municipality to re-iterate their concerns.

Whilst the MNR were very supportive of the OF4WD signage proposal it seems that when push came to shove they did want to follow through with an agreement. It seems the new Area Supervisor feels he does not want to be seen as taking sides, and that supporting OF4WD signage may be viewed as taking sides.

Clearly we must stay very close to this issue and will continue to be in active communication with the MNR. If we do not follow up, the cottage association will be the only ones at the table. I will be arranging face to face follow up meetings in the near future.

What you can do :

- Please stay on the trail
- Do not drive into the lakes to wash the mud off your vehicle or any other reason.
- Drive at slow/moderate speeds on the road into Black Lake and Bolger lake
- Be neighbourly when you encounter locals in the area. Only a few members of the cottage association are campaigning against access. We need to build positive relations with as many people as we can in the area.

Areas of concern

Greens Mountain

This is an ongoing item for some time now. Whilst nothing has come to pass so far, I am being told by the MNR that it will be looked at again this summer. The OF4WD will continue to be in communication with the MNR and ensure we are included in all associated consultations. We have offered to assist with planning and executing any trail remediation work.



Forest Mountain

It seems the MNR have concerns with Forest Mountain trail. A site visit was conducted by MNR staff and biologist a couple of years ago. The field work still needs to be done to determine if there are any species at risk concerns and other items, but they have it on their list as one of the areas they may want to issue a management plan on in the future. When this occurs they will include OF4WD in stakeholder consultations.

Adopt A trail program

The main architect behind this program is Brian Sibbles, who will also be taking the lead on this, acting as the OF4WD Trail Coordinator. Most of you probably know Brian. He has been our trail guide coordinator on CampNL for many years. Those that know Brian know he will be a great asset in leading this initiative.

The Adopt-a-trail program is basically a monitoring and maintenance program for trails. A member club or group of members would take on a specific area or trail. They will be required to ride the trail a minimum of twice a year, typically around the beginning and end of the season. Participants will gather and record information in a simple report (form template can be found on the members website) including pictures that will show trail conditions and identify possible problem areas. This report will be sent to the OF4WD trail coordinator (trailconditions@of4wd.com). This information will assist the board and volunteers in organizing possible maintenance work, from cleaning up brush to fixings culverts and water crossings.

This is a very important OF4WD program that will help the OF4WD achieve a number of key goals :



- Allow us to collate valuable information on the trails we use,
 - Create a detailed history of the usage and condition of a trail. This data is hugely important as it provides a factual record that we can call upon to present the case of sustainable trail use.
- Allows us to identify problems of trail or environmental concerns early and address them before they become bigger more difficult and expensive problems to solve. Also, better for us to find them before they are identified as a major problem by the MNR and others.
- Having an active trail monitoring and maintenance program is a key step to have in place if we are to release an OF4WD 4x4 recreational trail map.
- Will provide us with greater recognition and acceptance in the greater trails community (OFSC, OFATV, HATVA, OTC, Municipalities, MNR, etc.). When I present our case at trail meetings I am often asked what actual trail maintenance/repairs we do. Whilst we have done clean-ups and some trail work, in truth, we cannot show a track record as good as some of the other motorized groups. There again we do not get the industry sponsorship they get. With your help however, we hope to turn the tide there.
- Once we have some home grown successes under our belt specifically associated with trail maintenance/repair then I am confident that more doors will open for joint projects with the other trail groups and for grant funding.

We are taking a committed leadership role in managing and providing seed funding for this program. We will help provide required resources and obtain required permissions from MNR etc. However, the success of this project will be largely down to the commitment from you, our membership. We are relying on you, the member clubs and individuals to volunteer and show a long term commitment to this.

Please take time to read the brochure and participant guide that can be found on the Members area of the OF4WD web site :



Welcome to OF4WD Members Area

Please ensure that you visit the [MY OF4WD](#) link and keep your contact information updated. Up-to-date information ensures that you get your AGM mailings and other important information from the OF4WD

OF4WD Information

> **2010 Year end Financials**

[Click here](#) to download the PDF

> **Adopt a Trail program**

[Click here](#) for brochure

[Click here](#) for participant guide

[Click here](#) for Trail Report Form (you need to complete this)

> **We need your trails!**

If you have any trails in Ontario we need them for our trail mapping program.

Please send your GPS Data here

<http://www.of4wd.com/trailsmapping.asp>

OF4WD Trails Database and Trails committee

To provide a brief recap on why a trails database is important :

- To determine where OF4WD members are 4-wheeling and determine if those locations enter restricted areas such as parks.
- To inform the community when trails enter restricted areas as to avoid legal action or negative image for the hobby.
- To have knowledge of trail locations for use when issues with other user groups or government arise. The ability to overlay data and determine which areas of trails are sensitive or the subject of contention is key in the proactive and cooperative solving of trail disputes.
- When lobbying for continued trail access rights, the OF4WD must be able to show a historical use pattern of those trails in question. This relies on our possession of the appropriate GPS data.
- To eventually produce a provincial trail map for the benefit of OF4WD members. This project will ensure that 4WD users have current and complete knowledge of trail status and land disposition. It will also seek to prevent 4WD enthusiasts from straying to trails which may not be suitable for 4WD travel or may be on private/protected lands.
- In summary, the project provides the OF4WD with the tools it requires to resolve and identify both current and future trail disputes, and aims to prevent the



degradation of the 4WD reputation in response to poorly understood trail disposition.

Clearly there is some overlap here with the Adopt-a-trail program as not only do we need to know where the trails are but also maintain an accurate description what condition they are in.

This year we have managed to expand the database a little with some trails committee members have submitted, but the bad news is, no one else outside the committee has submitted any trails to us. Despite providing a web page linked off of our Home page and despite publicizing at the last two AGMs and elsewhere we have not received one submission to date, see (www.of4wd.com) :

Bobavgeon:

Concession Lake: 2 Rating
Terrain—majority is flat with light inclines and a couple of mud holes. One large mud hole with a by-pass which 31 with recovery gear is needed. Camping area's along the trail to enjoy the scenery and stop for lunch.
Access—through County Rd-46 to cottage roads White Valley and Bass Lake, ending up on Fire Access Road and County Rd 507
Connects through to other road access trails like Pichard and Weakest Link.

B-COONCESSION 213 16.8 mi 42.9 sq km
N44.64997 W78.52207



“> **Trails Database:** Please see [OF4WD Trail mapping project](#) “

Clicking on “OF4WD Trail mapping project “ will take you to :

<http://www.of4wd.com/trailsmapping.asp>

People complain of trail closures after the fact. If we know about the trails beforehand we can take steps to ensure we are notified of land use change proposals. If a land use change proposal comes up we can then actively engage in the review process and take steps to keep it open.

Please submit your trail data !!

4x4 Trail map for members

We often get enquiries from people asking where the trails are. We have discussed this and the prudent and responsible thing to do would be to only release a map of trails that are being successfully managed by the Adopt-a-Trail program. If we are to put our name to them then we must ensure they are monitored and maintained to a reasonable standard.

Our use must be seen as sustainable.



Forest management Plans

A good proportion of Crown Land (~70%) is designated general use, and for now, planning for these General Use Areas will primarily occur through the forest management planning process. The Forest Management Company are mandated to decommission new roads and access after the forestry operation is complete. Some of the “new” forest operation roads utilize existing undocumented trails, which can include trails we use. Clearly, it pays to be at the table.

Bancroft Minden

The OF4WD have been on the Local Citizens Committee for over 18 months now. The Forest Management plan has been finalized.

What did we achieve ? – we got amendments to the Good Neighbour policy to recognize undocumented trails and that existing stakeholder’s access rights will not be unduly affected. In addition we also got the OF4WD recognized as stakeholder under the Good Neighbour policy. If a bridge is scheduled to be removed, a hard bottom ford may be put in its place, or, if no replacement is considered viable, the OF4WD and its partners may have the option to acquire and maintain the bridge.

What we need to do now is make sure important water crossings are not completely decommissioned and the road/trail made impassable. We need to study the annual work schedules. If logging is planned in the blocks/areas where we have trails we need to identify our interest and ensure operations and decommissioning activities do not result in permanent loss of use.

Ottawa Valley

On initial communications the Ottawa Valley MNR stated *“For your information, the Ministry of Natural Resources does not condone the use of the trails with 4x4 trucks.”*

By June public meeting attended by the Eastern Ontario Trailblazers 4wd club, they stated that if the trail was there before they started logging, then access to the trail would remain after they logged it. Club members asked about gates on new forest roads and whether they would be trespassing if the trail entrance was 100 ft away and went behind the gate and were told that it would still be fine to travel the trail.

Other news/administrative updates :



New mailing address for OF4WD

We have moved over to using a postal box service. This will allow us to maintain the same address irrespective of board member/treasurer changes. The new address for all correspondence (mailed club renewals etc.) is :

OF4WD
Suite 240,
2 Toronto Street,
Toronto.
Ontario.
M5C 2B5

The contacts page has been updated on www.of4wd.com for convenient future reference.

Treasurer

We have a new treasurer, John Darling. Many of you probably know John from CampNL. John is a long time wheeler and has past experience in the Treasurer role with another organization.

Our past treasurer, Jean Robinson, stepped down at the end of 2010. We would like to thank Jean for the time and dedication she put in to the job in the year she was with us. She will be missed.

Members only forum on Jeep Kings

This is something that our members were very clear about at the AGM. They wanted to be able to discuss some topics in an open forum fashion. However, the main Jeep Kings site is accessed by not only the wheeling community but also by members of cottage associations and others. A private forum was seen as a way to facilitate a more candid exchange.

The OF4WD members only forum is up and running now. Please take the time to register.

As always though, we encourage you to address specific questions/concerns directly to us via our “Contact Us” page on the OF4WD web site. **This is the best method of contacting the OF4WD** – see <http://www.of4wd.com/contact.asp>

The OF4WD website will remain your resource for OF4WD Newsletters and other OF4WD materials and business.



What can you or your club do to support the OF4WD ?

- Be careful what you post on publicly viewable web pages. Please take a look at our “Policy on posted images” document under the reference section of the OF4WD Members web site for guidance. We are aware of a number of cases where careless postings have been used against us.
- Trail cleanups, community events. As you know these have been hugely successful in presenting a positive image of 4WD recreation to the MNR and wider trails community.
- Please submit your trails to OF4WD Database. To protect your access to the trails we need to know where they are. Visit <http://www.of4wd.com/trailsmapping.asp>
- We need sponsorship/ we need money. If you have a company or influence within your company to steer some sponsorship our way then please do. The stronger financial base we have the better placed we are to fight for your access rights.
- Keep the OF4WD informed. Be our eyes and ears. If you come across land use issues then drop us a line. Similarly if you become aware of disputes or incidents on or over trails, information or news items that you think might be useful to us then please pass them on, email info@of4wd.com. The better informed we are the better able we are to represent you.