



Proven Formula to Protect Access and Save Trails

By Del Albright

Saving (and sustaining) a trail system, protecting access, and keeping our off-pavement motorsports alive and well boils down to a proven formula: Engineering, Education, Enlisting and Enforcement. In the simplest of terms, this means 1) design it right; 2) let people know the rules and how to help; 3) get involvement from as many and varied users as you can; and 4) use trail patrols and if needed, law enforcement officers to ensure the rules are followed.

I am borrowing from the fire service all over the country with their fire prevention programs that rely on the “three E’s” -- Engineering, Education and Enforcement. In fire prevention, the object is to design (engineer) a building, house or sub-division in such a way as to minimize the chances of fire. You then educate folks about preventing fires with signs, letters, commercials, school programs and whatever it takes. Then, if that doesn't work, you bust people with tickets for not complying and thereby jeopardizing not only themselves, but their neighbors.

With protecting trail access, we have to add in the fourth E, Enlisting – getting involvement from as many volunteers, agencies, users, and businesses as you can. It is through volunteerism that we add a work force to an always diminishing “staff” in land management agencies. When agencies or land owners say, “We don’t have the staff to maintain the trails,” volunteers step up, adopt the trail and become that staff. This kind of dedication and involvement, has to be enlisted; it doesn’t happen by itself.

Here are many of the components of the formula for you to add into your efforts for protecting access.

Engineering:

Risk Management Assessment
Water control and runoff
Water crossings (hardening)
Soil stability
Rolling dips, waterbars and other erosion/sediment control devices
Gabions and other rock structures to strengthen and harden trail surfaces
Vegetation (as a soil stabilizing factor)
Grade, or slope; out slope/in slope
Rider conflicts and user needs
Good inventory of all routes and trails
Loop trails/roads where possible
Monitoring, with data collection to meet agency needs and trail future

Education:

Signage to ensure rules are known and "stay the trail" is in effect
Brochures and handouts (tap into TreadLightly! RIDE ON, and other programs out there)
Check in, kiosks, permits
Web page/forums and user meetings as needed
Develop and share trail "code of ethics" like those of BlueRibbon Coalition
(www.sharetrails.org)
Hold trail meetings or training sessions for trail education

Enlisting:

Getting volunteers (users, agencies, businesses) involved
Volunteer training to ensure leadership and efficiency
Leadership development and on-going training
Adopt a trail programs with agencies and land owners
Organized segmented layout for easy adoption/maintenance
Publication of volunteer efforts
Application for grants using volunteer hours
Developing advocacy talents within the volunteer ranks

Enforcement:

Grant for LEO or security/cops
Rules well posted.
Warning system
Well-advertised
Volunteer trail patrol
Published activities and successes of enforcement as needed

As always, I suggest you belong to and check with past successes of your national, regional and state associations to see how this formula might have already been applied to your area.

Four E's Article

If you apply the elements of this formula to protecting access, my 30+ years of landuse (and fire service) tell me we will all have a better and more sustainable trail future!

Del