



St. John Valley

by Dave Kelso,
Fort Kent

The St. John Valley is synonymous with snowmobiling during the winter months. Thanks to the local ATV clubs in the Valley, we now have ATV riding available for the visitors of the region.

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Valley ATV Riders, an ATV club in Fort Kent Mills, worked very hard this past winter in gaining access to Irving Woodlands. Riders can leave Fort Kent and ride to St. Francis to the west, Grand Isle to the East and Eagle Lake to the south and all points in between.

Bert Levesque, Secretary of Valley ATV Riders has spoken with riders that have gone to Caribou via the trail system. He believes that trails are available that will take riders as far south as Houlton.

Bert and Dan Nicolas, President of Valley ATV Riders, worked with Irving Woodlands with help from State Representative Troy Jackson of Allagash. The main problem was the liability issue that Irving wanted to avoid. Liability insurance was purchased through ATV of Maine. Riders of the Valley trail system need to belong to a local club to be covered under the umbrella policy.

A single rider can purchase a club membership for \$20.00.

Families with up to three machines can join the club for \$30.00. A portion of the dues go to the insurance policy and the rest is earmarked for trail repairs and the cost of the required stickers that have to be displayed on the ATV.

Club memberships and trail

stickers are available throughout the region for the convenience of the visiting rider. Anyone wishing to ride the trail system can find stickers at Fort Kent Ski-Doo, Roger's Sport Center, Corrivau's Arctic Cat Plus and the Greater Fort Kent Area Chamber of Commerce. After regular business hours the Fort Kent Police Department will be happy to help. In Eagle Lake stickers can be obtained at the Town Office during business hours or Fish River Lodge. I am sure other area

businesses are also offering this convenience; I have just not been notified of the service yet. Please contact the Chamber office in Fort Kent and let me know so I can add

only lead to the trails being kept open year to year with landowner cooperation. The hope is to get all the ATV clubs in the valley to map their trails to be included on future printings of the Maine ATV Trail Map published by the Department of Conservation. Some trail maps are now available by going to www.valleyatvridders.com.

Riders will find amenities conveniently located throughout the trail system. Gas, food and lodging are located trailside or on short spurs



you to the list.

The trail system is well marked. Bert and Dan urge riders to stay on marked trails. This will

leading from the trails. Area businesses have been very supportive of the club's efforts and help with their fund raising activities and trail work.

Users of the trail system will be treated to some of the most spectacular views in Maine. The trails lead through both farmland and woodlands. Fishing opportunities are along the trails for those wishing to have a purpose to get somewhere. Of course, wildlife viewing and photo opportunities always present themselves.

Burt wants all riders to remember: 1. Stay on marked trails 2. Yield to pedestrians, bicyclists, horseback riders and farm machinery 3. Always respect the landowner's property 4. Use common sense when riding with regards to safe speeds. Finally get out and enjoy the trails with friends and family.

Dave Kelso is the Executive Director of the Greater Fort Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and a Registered Master Maine Guide for the last 28 years.

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