

BCPowersportsDealers Association



Unity through Advocacy, Collaboration & Education

BCPDA POSITION STATEMENT

Provincial Recreational Off-Road Vehicle Prohibition During Wildfire Season

August 2026

The BC Powersports Dealers Association (BCPDA) recognizes the serious wildfire conditions facing many areas of British Columbia and supports reasonable, evidence-based measures necessary to protect communities, wildfire personnel and our province's natural resources.

Our industry understands wildfire risk and shares government's objective of preventing human-caused wildfires. However, BCPDA has significant concerns with the Province's current approach to restricting recreational off-road vehicle (ORV) use on Crown land.

Our Concern Is With the Approach — Not the Need for Wildfire Protection

BCPDA supports restricting recreational backcountry access when local wildfire conditions create an unacceptable risk. What we cannot support is an approach that:

- singles out recreational ORV users while allowing other forms of backcountry recreation and access to continue;
- applies restrictions across very large geographic regions despite significantly different local conditions;
- establishes a prohibition extending well into the fall rather than using shorter review periods tied to current conditions; and
- does not adequately recognize the significant economic consequences for powersports dealerships, tourism operators and rural communities.

Wildfire risk is fundamentally about conditions and human behaviour — not simply the mode of transportation used to enter the backcountry. If recreational activity creates an unacceptable wildfire or emergency-response risk, restrictions should be based on that risk and applied fairly.

Dealers are hearing significant confusion about what is permitted, including why some Forest Service Roads may remain accessible to on-highway vehicles while recreational ORVs are prohibited. Clear, consistent rules — and the rationale for different treatment — are essential for public understanding and compliance.

One Region Does Not Mean One Set of Conditions

British Columbia's fire centres encompass enormous and geographically diverse areas where conditions can vary dramatically. One community may face extreme drought and active wildfire

conditions while another has recently received significant rainfall and substantially different ground and vegetation conditions.

BCPDA therefore believes wildfire-related recreation restrictions should be regional, responsive and based on current local conditions rather than unnecessarily broad geographic prohibitions.

Why Two Months?

BCPDA is concerned about a prohibition that could remain in place until October, covering most of the remaining summer and fall riding season, the beginning of hunting season, and one of the most important sales and service periods for BC powersports dealerships.

August through October are critical months: new model-year products arrive, consumers make purchasing decisions, and service departments prepare ATVs and side-by-sides for fall recreation and hunting season.

Since the August 10 announcement, dealers have reported reduced showroom traffic, delayed or cancelled purchases, and declines in service work. Consumers are also reconsidering September and October vacations, hunting trips and ORV tours because they do not know whether access will be restored even if conditions improve.

The Economic Impact Is Already Being Felt

The scale of the sector underscores what is at stake. Moto Canada's 2024 economic impact study, using 2022 data, found that ATV and UTV activity in British Columbia generates approximately \$808 million in total economic output, contributes \$430 million to GDP and supports 3,820 jobs. It also generates approximately \$423 million in tourism-related economic output and \$124 million in retail sales of vehicles, parts and accessories. The sector contributes approximately \$69 million in provincial tax revenue annually, in addition to \$65 million federally and \$16 million municipally.

Source: Moto Canada, British Columbia ATV & UTV Economic Impact (2024), based on 2022 data.

On August 19, BCPDA met with approximately 30 powersports dealers and OEM representatives. The message was consistent: the economic impact began almost immediately and extends well beyond individual vehicle sales.

- significant reductions in showroom and dealership foot traffic;
- customers delaying or cancelling ATV and side-by-side purchases because they are uncertain when they will be able to use them;
- rental businesses experiencing an immediate and, in some cases, complete loss of ORV rental activity;
- reduced service appointments as customers postpone preparing machines for hunting and fall recreation;
- increasing costs associated with inventory that is not moving.

Unsold inventory carries significant costs. Floor-plan interest continues to accumulate while machines remain unsold, even as new model-year inventory arrives, creating storage pressure and increasing aged-inventory costs.

These impacts compound quickly in a seasonal, relatively narrow-margin industry. Dealers must continue paying fixed costs while absorbing inventory financing, storage and other carrying costs. Prolonged reductions in activity can also mean fewer service hours, reduced staffing requirements and potential layoffs, with similar pressures on rental, tourism and rural businesses.

The uncertainty itself is driving decisions now about purchases, service work, hunting trips and fall recreation. Once a seasonal sales, service or tourism opportunity is lost, businesses may not be able to recover that revenue this year.

A more balanced approach would use short-term restriction periods — for example, two-week intervals — with each extension requiring transparent reassessment of wildfire activity, weather forecasts, drought conditions and regional risk. Restrictions could remain where warranted and be adjusted or lifted as conditions improve.

BCPDA and its members have a vested interest in protecting British Columbia's backcountry. Dealers can also help government communicate restrictions, changing conditions and wildfire-prevention requirements to thousands of ORV users. BCPDA is prepared to work with BC Wildfire Service to support clear, accurate communication.

Responsible Riders Can Be Part of the Solution

Responsible backcountry users can also be valuable eyes and ears on the landscape. Experienced riders travel remote forest roads and trails, often carry emergency equipment, and can identify and report fires, hazards and suspicious activity.

Government should work with the powersports and organized recreation communities on practical wildfire-prevention measures, including designated riding areas, temporary localized closures, fire-suppression equipment requirements during elevated risk, education campaigns and club-supported compliance.

BCPDA Is Asking the Province to Reconsider the Current Approach

BCPDA is calling on the Province and BC Wildfire Service to:

1. Move from broad regional prohibitions to more localized restrictions.

Restrictions should reflect actual wildfire, drought, weather and ground conditions within individual areas wherever operationally possible.

2. Review restrictions in shorter intervals.

Rather than imposing restrictions covering most of the remaining riding season, establish regular review periods — ideally every two weeks — with restrictions extended, modified or removed according to current conditions.

3. Apply recreational restrictions consistently.

If wildfire conditions justify keeping people out of an area, government should consider the risk

created by recreational activity generally rather than singling out one method of backcountry access.

4. Clearly communicate the evidence and criteria being used.

Industry and the public should understand what thresholds trigger restrictions, how geographic boundaries are determined and what conditions must improve before restrictions are removed.

5. Consider and monitor the economic consequences.

Powersports dealerships, rental operators, tourism businesses and rural communities depend heavily on BC's short recreation season. Economic impacts should be considered when determining the scope and duration of restrictions, including lost sales and rentals, reduced service activity, floor-plan interest, storage and aged-inventory pressures, potential staffing reductions and broader tourism impacts. BCPDA members are already reporting measurable impacts and are prepared to provide ongoing industry information to government.

Protect the Backcountry — Fairly

BCPDA supports protecting British Columbia's communities, forests and wildfire personnel. When extreme conditions require everyone to stay out of the backcountry, we will support and help communicate that message.

Restrictions should be proportionate to actual risk, geographically appropriate, regularly reassessed and applied fairly. Protecting British Columbia from wildfire and maintaining responsible backcountry access do not have to be competing objectives.

With better regional decision-making, transparent criteria and meaningful collaboration with affected people and businesses, British Columbia can accomplish both.

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