

Date submitted (Mountain Standard Time): 4/12/2019 2:36:31 PM

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Montana needs access and road obliteration is NOT helping. Below are two studies of the health value of Off Road recreation AND the high level of suicide in Montana. We can see that the more opportunity for outdoor recreation the better our mental health. Every road can act as an effective tool against suicide.

Fitness on the trail Trail use aids physiological and psychological health, even in unexpected ways

By Karen Umphress NOHVCC PROJECT COORDINATOR AND MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN TRAILS BOARD

I have been active in the outdoors all of my life. Camping, hiking, fishing, canoeing, and swimming were all parts of family recreational time. When I lived in Washington State for a while one of my favorite forms of outdoor recreation was hiking on Mount Rainier; and one of my favorite hikes was along the Carbon River and Glacier. This is a seven-mile trip out to the Tolmie Peak lookout and back going over Ipsut Pass. Along the way there are several thousand feet of elevation change. It takes a full day and is a great workout. Once I moved back to Minnesota, the hikes just weren't the same so I found another form of outdoor recreation, riding off-highway motorcycles (OHMs). While many people believe that OHM riding just involves sitting on a motorcycle and letting it carry you and do all of the work, nothing can be farther from the truth. It took me a full riding season to build up enough endurance to last an entire day of riding and I was still completely exhausted by the end of the day; even more exhausted than after my 14-mile Tolmie Peak hike. I even started working out in a gym during the winter so that I could ride well the next season.

This physical exertion is nothing new to off-highway vehicle (OHV) riders, but convincing the non-riding public or government officials of the fact was always dubious at best; until 2010 at least. The story actually begins in 2006 with the Ontario Federation of Trail Riders (OFTR) out of Ontario, Canada. In Ontario, trails fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport, where riding an off road motorcycle wasn't necessarily considered a physical activity since a motor is used. The OFTR needed to provide real proof that riding an OHM can raise your heart rate. York University in Toronto has a Fitness Laboratory and they perform fitness tests for prison guards, firefighters, and the NHL draft. The OFTR approached the University and found Jamie Burr, a PhD candidate, willing to perform a pilot study with limited resources. "We paid him \$500 and arranged to have 12 riders tested at Canadian Motorcycle Training Services at Horseshoe Resort," said Ken Hoeberman, Executive Director of the OFTR. "We needed a pilot study to get the wheels turning into a full and comprehensive research study that would be credible."

The underlying question proposed for the study was, "Does participation in off-highway vehicle recreation have reasonable energy demands to be considered a legitimate form of exercise?" The answer was a resounding yes; relating off-highway motorcycle to hard or vigorous exercise according to Canada's Health and Fitness Benefits of Physical Activity Performance guidelines and the American College of Sports Medicine's (ACSM) position on the "recommended quantity and quality of exercise." The results of this pilot study were conclusive enough to warrant further studies.

The next study was also conducted with Jamie Burr, together with colleagues Veronica K. Jamnik and Jim A. Shaw and Professor Norman Gledhill at York University; its purpose was to characterize the physiological demands of recreational OHV riding under typical OHV riding conditions using habitual recreation OHV riders.

It was funded by the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council, the All-Terrain Quad Council of Canada, The Motorcyclists Confederation of Canada, and the Government of Nova Scotia.

The first phase of the study was to survey 310 participants to determine the characteristics of the "typical" rider and the "typical" ride. This would be used as a baseline for further research. The second phase was to monitor and measure the physical demands of OHV riding, including both OHMs and ATVs. The physical demands of the sport included oxygen consumption, muscular involvement (fatigue), and rate of exertion. The study used established scientific methods and correlation practices.

The results were published in four reports, with the first report published in 2010. The first report covered the physiological results of OHV riding. It was determined that OHV riding is a recreational activity associated with moderate-intensity cardiovascular demand and fatigue-inducing muscular strength challenges, similar to other self-paced recreational sports such as rock-climbing, alpine skiing, and golf. Oxygen consumption, an indicator of physical work, increased by 3.5 times for ATV riders and 6 times for OHM riders. And the study confirmed the pilot study's findings that the exercise can be labeled hard or vigorous.

The second report was focused on the mental well-being of OHV riders. Through survey information the team compared the Mental Component Summary, measures which reflect mental status, of OHV riders and the general public. Based on the scores, OHV riders are expected to have lower levels of stress and depression as well as a higher overall life satisfaction. These findings correlate to other forms of recreational exercise and stress reduction findings.

The two remaining reports examined the fitness and health of habitual recreational off-road riders; and fitness and health training adaptations from six to eight weeks of OHV riding (i.e. how much OHV riding is required for health and fitness benefits to be derived.)

These studies prove what people in the trails community and specifically the motorized trails community already know; that trails help people live healthier, happier lives. More information on the studies can be found at www.nohvcc.org/Tools/Library/TopicLibraries/Health.aspx.

State would put additional \$500,000 toward efforts
Phil Drake Great Falls Tribune USA TODAY NETWORK

HELENA - A state Senate panel OK'd a bill that would appropriate funds for suicide prevention efforts in the state, hoping to decrease a rate that keeps Montana near the top nationwide for self-inflicted deaths.

The Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee voted 9-1 Wednesday to approve House Bill 696, which would appropriate \$500,000 from the general fund to the Department of Public Health and Human Services to be used for suicide prevention activities.

Last year, the state approved House Bill 118, which allocated \$500,000 for suicide prevention efforts. HB 696, sponsored by Rep. Jessica Karjala, D-Billings, would put another \$500,000 toward the undertaking.

Suicide completions dropped in Montana from 312 to 270 in 2018, the largest single-year drop in years, said Zoe Barnard, DPHHS administrator for the addictive and mental disorders division. She said it could be due to Medicaid expansion, more effective outreach, implementation of HB 118 and a 43 percent increase to calls to the suicide lifeline in the past year.

"Please let us continue the suicide prevention work," she said. Karjala said Montana is one of a few states participate in the Governors Challenge to Prevent Suicide, which places emphasis on service members, veterans and their families.

"While it's quite an honor, it is also a testament to how dire suicide rates are for veterans in Montana," she said.

Montana has ranked in the top five for suicide rates in the nation for 30 years, according to the Department of Public Health and Human Services.

In a 2016 National Vital Statistics Report, Montana had the second-highest rate of suicide in the nation (267 suicides for a crude rate of 25.9).

From 2012-2016, Montana had the highest rate of suicide among American Indians (28.5 per 100,000) although they make up 6 percent of the state's population. White people are second at 23.1 per 100,000.

Sixty-two percent of suicides are through firearms, 20 percent are by suffocation and 9 percent through poisoning. Other means include carbon monoxide, overdose, motor vehicles accidents, and jumping from heights.

The suicide rate during that same time period for youth ages 11-17 is 12.6 per 100,000, almost triple the national rate of 4.5, according to DPHHS.

Studies show there are six survivors for every completed suicide. Given there are about 230 suicides in Montana every year, that also means there are about 1,400 new survivors.

The bill states the money for HB 696 must be used to put strategies into practice that are developed, with assistance from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, as part of the mayor's challenge or the governor's challenge to prevent suicide among service members, veterans, and their families.

According to the bill, it will also be used to continue state and tribal efforts in implementing the action steps of the 2017 Montana Native Youth Suicide Reduction Strategic Plan. The Secretary of State is to send a copy of the bill to each tribal government on the seven Montana reservations and to the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe.

Rep. Bridget Smith, D-Wolf Point, said the funds from HB 118 last session provided half the money needed to implement the strategic plan.

"The money does not go to bureaucrats," she said. "We are making progress. It's effective," she said.

Rep. Rae Peppers, D-Lame Deer, said she keeps a phone by her bed because veterans in her area know they can call her if they are struggling.

"They know who I am," she said.

"This HB 696 is really important to me because it is going to serve the people of my community across Montana," she said. "It bothers me that people think suicide is the best way."

Veteran journalist Phil Drake is our eye on the state capitol. For tips, suggestions or comment, he can be reached at 406-231-9021 or pdrake@greatfallsbtribune.com.