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# ATVA NEWS

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**ATVA**

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE



# Glenn Myers And The Cheaha Trail Riders Create Trails

*"Audemus jura nostra defendere" translates from Latin to "We Dare Defend Our Rights." While that's the official motto of the state of Alabama, it also could be the motto of the Cheaha Trail Riders. When Alabama riders saw their riding opportunities being taken away in the national forests in 1988, they didn't just sit back and watch it happen. They decided to act, joining together in 1989 to form the Cheaha Trail Riders organization ([www.CheahaTrailRiders.com](http://www.CheahaTrailRiders.com)). The Cheaha Trail Riders then focused on creating riding areas, with success. They continue on that mission today, some 20 years later. Glenn Myers, who was there from the beginning, is Cheaha Trail Riders president and one of the most active advocates for ATV riders in Alabama and in the nation. We asked Myers to talk about his group, what it takes to be successful, and how he stays motivated since he has to fit his activist activities around his full-time job.*

Photos by Danny Hubbard, Cheaha Trail Riders

## **Who are the Cheaha Trail Riders?**

We consider ourselves to be an organization as opposed to a club because of our corporate status. We are an OHV advocacy group of volunteers promoting the development of OHV trail systems throughout the U.S.A. and especially in the state of Alabama. We promote OHV safety, education, family recreation, riding responsibly, environmental conservation and volunteerism. We have 210 members as of October 2009.

## **What are some of your responsibilities as president of the organization?**

To encourage membership growth, preside at meetings, work with the other officers to maintain a professional organization and promote volunteerism in projects, and work with OHV manufacturers, dealers and government agencies to provide grants for Cheaha Trail Riders projects.

## **What kind of activities are club members involved in?**

We have monthly organized rides. We're involved in an annual Make-A-Wish Foundation charitable event in November of each year, disaster recovery, trail maintenance at different trail systems in Alabama, and a trail and water monitoring project with the U.S. Forest Service. We are also working with local officials in promoting

existing trail systems, working with the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) in discovering potential new trail systems across Alabama, and assisting at SAE University Baja events in the South.

## **What are some of the Cheaha Trail Riders' accomplishments?**

We help design and develop the Kentucky ORV Park in the Talladega National Forest in Munford, Ala. We help design and develop the Minooka OHV Park in Chilton County, Ala. We designed Warfield Point OHV Park in Greenville, Miss. We made a presentation to the Alabama Forest Owners Association that has more than 7,000 members and, as a result, the Doc Hilt Trail OHV System was developed. We helped in the design and grooming of this system. We also voted to direct ADECA Recreational Trails Program grant funds for the purchase of land and the building of an OHV trail system at Stony Lonesome OHV park in Cullman County, Ala.

## **How did the Kentucky ORV Park come about?**

It came about as a result of the U.S. Forest Service calling a public input meeting in 1988 to get ideas about what could be done relating to motorized recreation. As a result of that meeting a small group of volunteers, including myself, began to design and to build the first ORV park in the state of Alabama in

cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service. That's the core group that later became the Cheaha Trail Riders. Some of the obstacles that we faced in creating the Kentucky ORV Park included getting approvals from the federal government for the design and location, getting work releases and other typical red tape.

## **How did the Minooka OHV Park come about?**

The Minooka OHV Park is made up of over 15 miles of OHV trails along with campgrounds, restroom facilities, and a 15-acre lake with a mile-long hiking and walking trail around the perimeter. The Cheaha Trail Riders made a presentation to the Chilton County Commission and commissioners voted to build the park. The land was a small parcel donated by the federal Bureau of Land Management to Chilton County for recreation. It took over four years to develop and it was another two years before the park opened to the public because of political issues. The Cheaha Trail Riders organization was instrumental in obtaining ADECA Recreational Trails Program grant funds for Minooka as part of the Grant Approval Advisory Board.

Some of the obstacles included convincing local politicians to proceed according to plan. A few new politicians were opposed to the idea and created a delay in the opening. Getting utilities into the park and getting approval for sewage disposal also posed problems.



# MAKING IT HAPPEN

**Members of the Cheaha Trail Riders are hard-working, hard-riding enthusiasts who get together to enjoy the outdoors while working to create riding areas for the current and future generations.**

## **Are there any other parks in the works in Alabama? What are the obstacles being faced?**

Talladega Coosa River Storage Annex is one of the opportune potential parks that will be a multiuse park. The Cheaha Trail Riders developed the master plan for this park. However, because of the local political situation, this park has been delayed for going on three years. The property has been awarded to the city of Lincoln by the National Park Service due to base closure and realignment. However, Talladega County holds the first deed and will not adhere to the National Park Service demand to transfer this property to Lincoln. The park would offer a multitude of recreation in addition to over 150 miles of OHV trails. Potential revenue generation to the area would be around \$50 million annually.

We are working with the Alabama Forestry Commission Geneva State Forest in the potential development of OHV trails within their 7,000-acre property. Geneva is located just north of the Florida line near Enterprise, Ala. We are currently in the initial stages of discussions and will soon work with the locals to determine the needs and desires for such a park. We have already ridden the property to spec the potential. Obstacles include approval from the Alabama Forestry Commission to build OHV and equestrian trails within this property. Lack of funding will be an obstacle because grant money is slim in 2010.

## **What advice would you give to riders in a state who want to create a new riding area or new trails?**

Talk with the Cheaha Trail Riders and glean from our experiences with building trails, promoting with local

officials, tactics in presentations to local politicians and master plan design, to name a few. They should also organize a club or join an existing club so they would have a larger voice. Join the ATVA to gain support and educational tools from the national level. Talk to local OHV dealers to gain their support, both financially and to become a part of the project in a work-related fashion.

The very first thing is to become educated about how to go about developing and designing a trail system so when you talk to the officials you are able to answer their questions. The Cheaha Trail Riders has gleaned information from many of the state's economic impact studies. These studies can be used to incorporate the potential revenue that would be generated by such a trail system to the area. Money speaks louder than words. Make sure the neighbors to the property understand that this will be good for them due to the increase of property value and potential retail income.

## **What are some of the biggest challenges facing ATV riders in your state today?**

Lack of places to ride. Illegal riding on private property. Noise. Lack of respect for other riders. No state titles for machines. Funding for new parks. Political roadblocks due to the lack of understanding for the sport.

## **How important is it for ATV riders to be aware of what is going on related to ATV legislation at the national, state and local levels?**

It is very important because there are groups across the nation that are trying to shut down all motorized recreation on public and private land. ATV riders need to join clubs and groups such

as the ATVA to help make our voice stronger. We need to be proactive instead of reactive. *ATVA News* and *American Motorcyclist* (the magazine of the *American Motorcyclist Association*, which is the ATVA's parent organization) are excellent resources to keep the rider up to date on legislation relating to OHV recreation.

## **How can ATV riders help protect their right to ride?**

Join the ATVA, a state or local club that is actively fighting for our rights, such as the Cheaha Trail Riders, and vote for politicians who support the sport.

## **When and how did you start riding ATVs?**

I started riding dirtbikes in 1972, before ATVs were manufactured. Honda produced the first ATV called the Big Wheel in mid-1970s and I began riding ATVs at that time.

## **What are the rewards for you in fighting for riding areas and trails?**

Enjoying the parks to ride in, seeing young children enjoying the sport and outdoors, seeing local area businesses enjoy the revenue that such a park generates, and having fun developing and working on trail systems.

## **What has been the most frustrating part for you?**

Battling local politicians and their lack of vision.

## **How do you stay motivated?**

Seeing the smile on a child's face and them saying "thank you" after their ride.

## **Is there anything else you would like to add?**

Happy trails and let's go riding!