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Mr. Michael York
State Librarian
20 Park Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301-6314

Dear Mr. York

Pursuant to RSA 215-A:3 IX and RSA 215-C:2 X, enclosed is the annual report that the Executive Director of the Fish and Game Department is required to file with the State Library. This report encompasses the time period from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016.

Registration totals for FY 2016 are as follows:

	<u>RESIDENT</u>	<u>NON-RESIDENT</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>
Snowmobile	14,636	8,244	22,880
ATV	18,236	7,602	25,838
Temporary OHRV		976	976
Trail Bike	2,595	1209	3,804
Transfers	568		
Dealer/Rental	657		
Antique/Event	553		

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Enforcing OHRV/Snowmobile Safety

During the winter, Conservation Officers continue enforcement efforts to control excessive speed, unlawful operation, and modified exhausts while working cooperatively with landowners and snowmobile clubs to keep the trails safe. The statewide snowmobile trail system exceeds 7500 miles. Loud exhaust and unlawful operation are primary complaints leading to the closing of snowmobile trails on private property. Excessive speed and irresponsible off-trail riding are areas of continued concern. Conservation Officers focus patrol efforts on these problems through speed enforcement details, trail patrols and community policing initiatives at a variety of snowmobiling events throughout the state.

The 2015/2016 season was one of the poorest snow winters on record and snowmobiling opportunities were limited to only the most northern portions of the state. Only 22,880 snowmobiles were registered in FY 2016 as compared to 48,246 in FY 2015, (53% decrease) resulting in snowmobile registration revenues well below the norm. In contrast, OHRV (wheeled vehicle) registration numbers reached a historic high of 30,618.

Conservation Officers conduct Off Highway Recreational Vehicle (All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV), Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTV), and trail bike) enforcement patrols during the warmer months to improve overall trail safety, investigate accidents, address unlawful operation and work with landowners. Officers work with riders, clubs and local law enforcement to control illegal operation, illegal/loud exhaust, and help ensure safety on a growing network of maintained and approved trails on state and private land. Currently, there exists over 1000 miles of OHRV trail on several interconnected systems.

In addition, many of these trail systems provide extensive use on local and state public roadways to access services and provide further interconnectivity. These significant increases in ATV/UTV riding opportunities have significantly increased our enforcement, administrative and coordination responsibilities particularly in Coos County. In 2016, new legislation has expanded the state road permitting process for OHRVs in Grafton County. Other counties in central and southern New Hampshire have expanded town owned road use by OHRVs.

A review of OHRV wheeled vehicle registration trend data back to 2007 demonstrates a decline in registration totals that were at their lowest levels through 2010, 2011 and 2012. However, registrations began to rise from 2013 to present in response to the improving economy, increased riding opportunities and marketing efforts by the state and through OHRV organizations. In 2007, total wheeled vehicle registrations exceeded

27,000 machines. In FY 2012, 21,310 OHRVs were registered. For FY 2016, total OHRV registrations totaled 30,618, finally exceeding the 2007 total of a decade prior. The overall decrease in revenues during this 10 year period impacted our ability to adequately address enforcement issues and equipment purchases for this rapidly expanding trail and roadway network. Budget restrictions past and current, prevented

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filling vacant patrol areas and open/unfunded conservation officer position numbers negatively impacting our ability to meet constituent demand for adequate enforcement patrol coverage and constituent complaints. There is substantial justification to fill several vacant patrol positions. Numerous attempts to do so have been unsuccessful.

The Law Enforcement Division continues to administer the statutorily required Responsible Riders Safety Education Class as needed to those who operate while intoxicated, disobey a police officer, skim open water or operate to endanger any person or property laws.

OHRV/Snowmobile Safety Education

The Law Enforcement Division, through the Safety Education Program, actively promotes the safe and responsible operation of all recreational vehicles, facilitating this objective through enhanced enforcement patrols and safety education classes. The objective is to modify the behavior of the irresponsible rider and to promote safe trail systems. This is accomplished with the cooperation of the Bureau of Trails, DRED, OHRV and snowmobile clubs, and statewide associations.

Fish and Game continues to coordinate over 150 volunteer OHRV and snowmobile instructors who, along with part-time OHRV Regional Coordinators, conduct safety classes across the state with the assistance of local clubs, police/fire agencies and volunteers. Program staff continues to work with interested individuals, state associations and national organizations to develop new safety initiatives. The Department certified 1368 students during the reporting period. In May of 2014, the law enforcement division implemented OHRV Online Safety Education certification program. This alternative method of certification supplements the long standing traditional classroom course taught by volunteer instructors and part-time regional coordinators. The online course was implemented as a result of constituent demand for readily available methods of certification for non-residents traveling to NH to ride as well as resident's desire for modernized, flexible certification options.

The Law Enforcement Division OHRV/Snowmobile Program funds a full time Conservation Officer Program Coordinator, one full-time program assistant, part-time regional coordinators, and one conservation officer deputy to perform OHRV related duties.

Pursuant to RSA 215-A: 32-a and RSA 215-C:53, The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department is required to furnish OHRV and Snowmobile Statistical Information and Safety Report to the registrars of Vital Records and Health Statistics. A copy of these statistical reports is attached for your Committee.

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department is the primary OHRV Enforcement Agency. Conservation Officers from the Department conducted enforcement details for 9,270.75 hours and 1,352.5 overtime hours through a twelve

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month period and checked approximately 26,193 vehicles. During this period, Conservation Officers issued 916 violations and 803 warnings for violations of Chapter 215-A and 215-C. The lack of snow significantly reduced snowmobile enforcement patrol activity during this period. Much of this documented patrol time was related to OHRV wheeled vehicle enforcement.

In accordance with RSA 215-A: 23 and RSA 215-C: 39, the Fish and Game Department collected \$3,475,380.32 in registration fees in FY 2016. A breakdown of fees collected per OHRV Category is attached. Pursuant to RSA 215-A: 23 and RSA 215-C: 39, the Fish and Game Department forwarded \$2,245,791.16 to the Department of Resources and Economic Development, Bureau of Trails. The Fish and Game Department retained the remaining amount of \$1,229,589.16 for OHRV enforcement, OHRV Safety Education and Training, Wheeled Vehicle Enforcement Contracts, and processing of Registration materials. Funds available to the department were as follows: \$1,012,862.33 for OHRV and Snowmobile Enforcement, Education and Training, and \$216,726.83 for the administration of the OHRV and Snowmobile Registration Program. These funds are non-lapsing and are utilized conservatively, in part to help offset minimal snow winters when snowmobile registrations can fluctuate substantially. This scenario occurred during this FY where only 22, 880 snowmobile registrations were sold, representing a 53% decrease. This carry-over funding process from one year to the next is vital to the stability and sustainability of the program.

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department also entered into OHRV Law Enforcement Contracts with 19 Police Agencies for a total of \$29,160.00.

The following addendums lists the activities for the above specified time period:

1. Off Highway Recreational Vehicle Safety Education Courses that were conducted by Department personnel and volunteers.

2. Vital Statistics Report
3. OHRV and Snowmobile Accident Statistics Report
4. Snowmobile and OHRV Enforcement Details conducted by Fish and Game Personnel
5. OHRV Wheeled Vehicle Enforcement Details conducted by other enforcement agencies
6. Fee Table

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You may contact Major John B. Wimsatt at 603-271-3129 if you need additional information regarding this report.

Sincerely,

Glenn Normandeau
Executive Director

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GN:JBW:dae

Original Copies to:

Chair, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee
Chair, House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
Chair, House Transportation Committee
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee

Chair, Senate Energy and Natural Resource
Chair, Senate Ways and Means Committee