

Motorized Recreation

Registrations for snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and motor boats provide recreation planners with information pertaining to trends in the activities relying on those machines. There is an assumption that individuals registering snowmobiles, ATVs, or boats intend to use them and the registrations are an appropriate proxy for popularity (demand). All registration data within this report comes from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, which collects registration data.

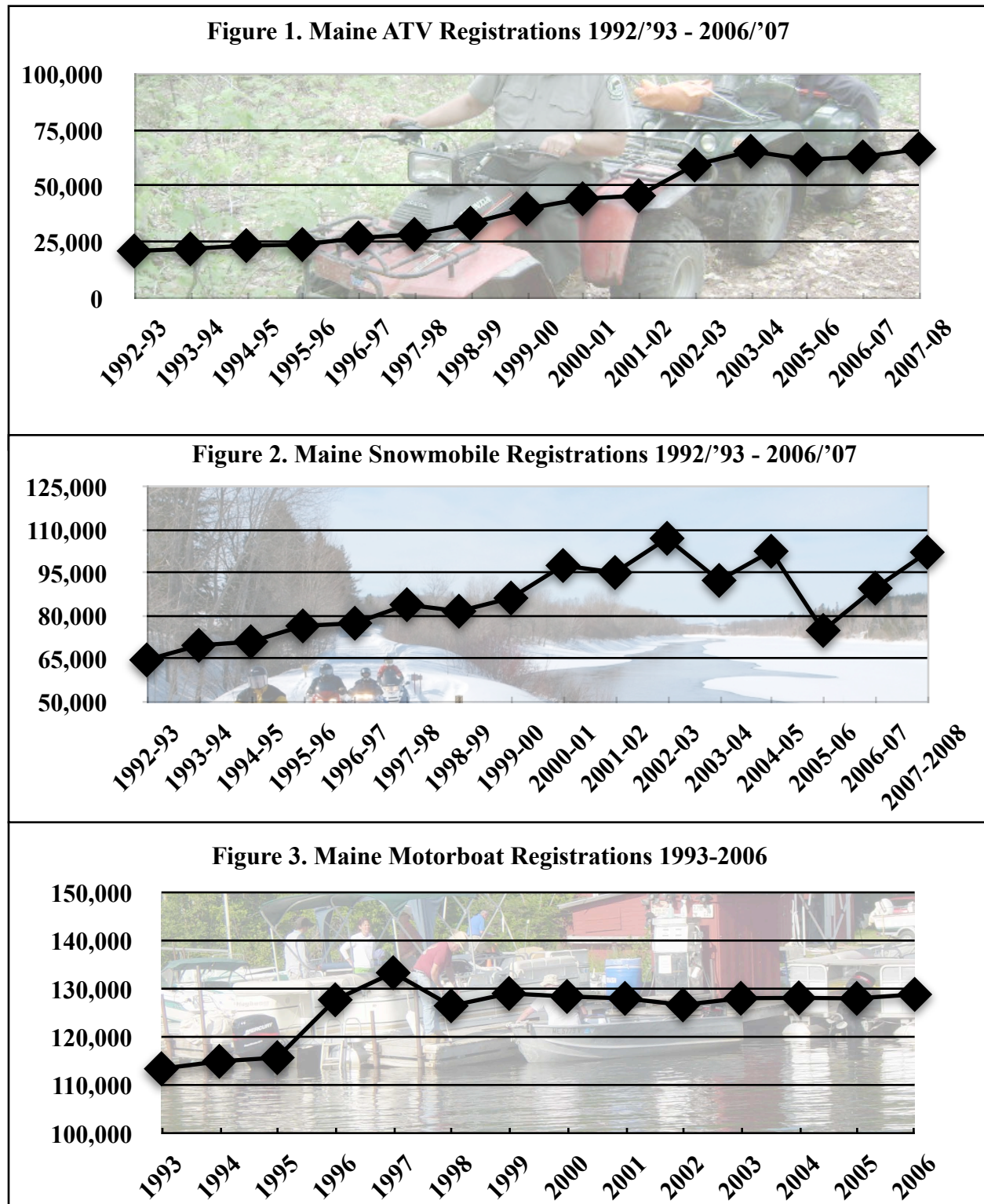
Motorized outdoor recreation in Maine has shown growth over the last 15 years. ATV registrations grew rapidly in the late 1990s through the 2003-2004 timeframe, when registrations growth slowed. **Figure 1** depicts the growth in Maine ATV registrations. Participation data from the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE) survey lists 26.8% of Maine residents as having driven off-road for pleasure (Cordell et al., 2008). It should be noted that this includes not only ATVs but 4x4 Jeeps and trucks as well as dirt bikes).

The rapid growth of ATV sales and use preceding creation of the 2003-2008 Maine SCORP led to “The ATV Issue” being listed as an implementation priority. As the 2003 Maine SCORP states, “an issue of overwhelming statewide concern that was raised in several groups was the impact of the tremendous growth in ATV use in Maine. Illegal or inappropriate use of All Terrain Vehicles is resulting in user conflicts and social problems on certain trails, causing environmental damage, leading to the closure of private lands to public recreational use, and can impede the acquisition of certain high-priority open space and recreational lands by government agencies and nongovernmental organizations” (Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, 2003). Additional study grew out of this issue, and the result is that in 2005, The University of Maine’s Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center published Economic Contributions of ATV-Related Activities in Maine (Morris et al., 2005). This study estimated that \$156.0 million was spent in the 2003/2004 season to purchase, register, and operate ATVs (spending for accessories, clothing, lodging, gas, etc. was included in analysis). The report also included data reflecting rider and use characteristics. Select rider and use characteristics findings are summarized in **Table 1**.

Snowmobile registrations have also increased over the last decade. In that same time, however, volatility in registrations have increased as well. In the 2003/2004 winter season, registrations fell 14%. The next season, registrations rose 11%. The following winter (2005/2006), registrations fell 27%. Registrations have shown an uptick again in the last two seasons.

Motor boat registrations, including everything from small outboard motors for canoes to large pleasure craft, do not show any dramatic change over the past decade. As **Figure 3** shows, registrations have held steady in recent years.

According to NSRE participation data, Maine and West Virginia are the only two eastern states in the top ten of participation rates for off-highway recreational driving (Cordell, 2008).



Figures 1-3 (above) depict registration trends for ATVs, snowmobiles, and motorboats in Maine from the early 1990s to 2006. It should be noted that each graph uses a different scale.

<p>Table 1: ATV Riding Characteristics Findings (Source: 2005 <i>Economic Contributions of ATV-Related Activities in Maine</i> study)</p>
<p>Respondents rode an average of 520 miles/year in 2003/2004.</p>
<p>Riders with higher yearly riding totals were more likely to be members of an ATV club and to have taken a safety course. 21% of riders have ever been members of an ATV club.</p>
<p>Per capita ATV ownership was greatest in Franklin, Piscataquis, and Washington Counties. The Maine Highlands tourism region ranked as the largest riding location (35% of state riding)</p>
<p>1/3 of respondents have been riding for more than 15 years. 1/3 have been riding for less than 5 years.</p>
<p>Summer and fall seasons account for over 75% of all riding.</p>
<p>Over 65% of riding occurred on private land (including 31.9% on rider's own land). 15.1% of riding occurred on land of unknown ownership (i.e., rider did not know ownership).</p>
<p>78.4% of respondents rode at least some on private lands. Respondents reported riding at least some on state lands (38.9%), some on national or local lands (20.6%), and on unknown ownership (49.3%).</p>
<p>Respondents riding more miles/year reported riding more on marked ATV trails than did respondents riding less miles.</p>
<p>Nearly 2/3 of respondents took at least one overnight trip.</p>
<p>The top 5 factors influencing where to ride include, in order: courteous riders, scenery, interconnected trails, good signage, and a variety of terrain.</p>

A National Perspective on Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Recreation

The *Internet Research Information Series*, a collaborative effort between the USDA Forest Service's Southern Research Station and its Forestry Sciences Laboratory in Athens, Georgia; the University of Georgia in Athens; and the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee, produced a 2008 report entitled, *Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation in the United States and its Regions and States: An Update National Report from the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE)*. Excerpted discussion points are provided below. Though speaking at a national level, the sentiments expressed reflect issues of importance here in Maine.

◆“Despite a recent dip in OHV sales, most likely related to increasing gas prices and ownership saturation, OHV's still remain very popular. In particular, ATV sales account for more than 70 percent of the OHV market. There are approximately 44 million people, aged 16 years or older, who presently participate in OHV recreation. One-in-five Americans participated one or more times in OHV recreation within the past year. This interest in OHV recreation, overall, represents about an 18 percent increase in the number of OHV participants between 1999 and 2007. Population growth will most likely result in more OHV users in the future”.

◆“Increasing urban and ex-urban sprawl and loss of open private lands will be important in the future OHV participants seek to gain access to our public lands, such as national forests, for OHV recreation. Public land managers will not only be faced with increasing pressure from the numbers of OHV participants, but also additional demands for related services and facilities”.

References

- Cordell, H. Ken, Carter J. Betz, Gary T. Green, & Becky Stephens (2008). *Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation in the United States and its Regions and States: A National Report from the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE)*. Retrieved from <http://warnell.forestry.uga.edu/nrrt/nsre/IRISreports.html>.
- Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands (2003). *2003-2008 Maine State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*.
- Morris, Charles E., Thomas Allen Jonathan Rubin, Brian N. Bronson, & Cynthia S. Bastey. (2005). *Economic Contributions of ATV-Related Activities in Maine*. Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, University of Maine.