

WIN X 4!

Everyone wins when partners work together to improve trails on the Athens District of the Wayne National Forest.



Working with new equipment purchased with grant money from the Ohio DNR.

It's a winning situation all the way around. The partnership started with the Director of Ohio Department of Natural Resources (DNR) approving a grant of \$150,000 for the Athens District of the Wayne National Forest (NF) to purchase trail maintenance equipment so district personnel could immediately repair trail problems and perform standard maintenance quicker and at a lower cost. Athens District purchased a skid steer, a mini-excavator, and a gravel wagon.

Then Hocking College joined the partnership. Three Wayne NF employees enrolled in a class on equipment operation which will result in all three employees becoming certified to operate the new equipment. The Hocking College class is taking place on existing Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) trail on the

Athens District, performing reconstruction work as class proceeds. The Hocking College Students provide the labor to match the original grant.

A second grant from Ohio DNR provided \$179,000 for trail work. First priority with this money the Athens District purchased a new toilet facility - an SST or Sweet Smelling Toilet - for the Long Ridge Trailhead. The twelve mile Long Ridge trail is the steepest and narrowest of the district's trails and is generally only used by motorcycles. The length of the trail was divided up and a portion was allocated between two contractors who were funded to improve the surfacing, add rolling dips and obstacles to the trail. Hocking

College and Forest Service crews also worked on portions of the trail. On this section of the trail it was imperative to keep the challenge in the trail while protecting the resource.

The District was apparently successful. Rex Fisk, a rider from Buchtel, Ohio was one of several ATV riders to quickly write in and complement the Wayne on their efforts. He began with an apology, "First off, I'm one of those ATVers that in the past have complained, about your trail repair tactics. I've complained about losing mud holes to play in, about the amount of gravel you put down on the trails, and how wide, and ultimately fast you make the trails in your attempt to repair them. At the same time, I do realize your obligations in keeping the forest protected, but have felt you were over doing it just a bit."

Mr. Fisk went on to say, after his most recent visit to the Long Ridge Trail to survey the work there, "I quickly realized that the trails weren't dozed flat, that there wasn't gravel everywhere. In fact, the trails were still the tight, twisty, narrow FUN dirt trails they used to be. And what was becoming clear to me, and a little amazing, was that most of the mud holes were still there. Yes you had dozed a nice little trail around them, but you left them there. You left the rider the option. I had a blast. It was like Long Ridge had been reborn."

He said he couldn't get back home quick enough to get on the internet to let his riding buddies know what a TERRIFIC job the Wayne did on the Long Ridge trails. The trails did need repaired, and the Forest did the work in the manner that everyone should be happy with. He suggested the Forest should give all the employees responsible a pat on the back and an employee of the month special parking spot.

According to Mr. Fisk, the Long Ridge trail repairs should be the model for trail repair system wide. When our publics are happy with the work and the resources are protected, everyone benefits. The Wayne appreciates the Ohio DNR's ongoing support for economical trail maintenance. The Wayne NF now has the ability to repair dangerous and erosive trail damage immediately and effectively. The Wayne NF has 3 certified equipment operators. The Hocking College equipment operation class has a practice area which results in certified equipment operators and reconstructed OHV trails. And the OHV riders on Athens District have safer, better trails to ride.

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