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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
7/25/2008

## **SIMCOE COUNTY FORESTS – USERS BE AWARE, THE RULES HAVE CHANGED**

Users of the trails within the Simcoe County forests need to know that new policy guidelines are in place for all who enjoy these lands. With so many recreational users partaking in both non-motorized and motorized activities in the forests it was becoming increasingly challenging to accommodate and coordinate all groups to ensure a safe and pleasurable experience was available to all, while respecting the environmental concerns and multi-use right of ways. Simcoe County therefore reviewed the recreational use of County Forests and adopted a new Recreational Use Policy.

Being proactive, the organized trail user groups in Simcoe County involved in snowmobiling, ATV'ing, motorcycling, horseback riding, hiking and cycling, who all have representatives on the board of Huronia Trails and Greenways, have therefore met to discuss the implementation of the new forest rules, and have created several focus points, including:

- user organizations in Simcoe County have signed Land Use Agreements with the County of Simcoe, allowing permission by their members to use the forest. These organizations carry the requested insurance coverage, as required by the county. Individual users are encouraged to take out membership in their respective clubs to ensure sustainable funding is in place for continued coverage and access.
- off-road motorized user organizations have approval of the County to mark designated motorized trails, away from sensitive and built up residential areas
- new signage at trail entrances and along trails (see attached), indicating a sharing of the forest by various trail users
- trail wardens who are encouraging proper trail etiquette, educate users on where to ride, encourage noise control, assist where needed, etc.
- signs previously nailed into trees are being removed and replaced by signage on posts or painted trail blazes (note colours used by the various users: orange for motorcycle trails, white for Ganaraska Trail, light green for Simcoe County Trails loop trails, etc.)
- off-road motorized clubs are urging members and non-members to carry the green licence plate, along with individual insurance. An OFSC Trail permit, or membership card in the OFTR (motorcycling) or OFATV (ATVing) are mandatory requirements. Motorized users are encouraged to join a club and get educated on how and where to ride.

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- protocol and etiquette for multi-use

Listed below are highlights and some specific guidelines extracted from the new Simcoe County Forest Recreation Policy.

**Permitted Activities and conditions**

- Walking; hiking
- Cross-country skiing; snowshoeing
- Orienteering; geocaching
- Nature appreciation; nature study
- Dogsledding
- Horseback riding
- Dog walking: Pets must be under control or on leash
- Mountain biking: No unauthorized trail construction
- Snowmobiling :
  - On designated OFSC<sub>1</sub> trails only\*
  - Use Agreement and Permits are required
- Other off-road motorized vehicles (ATV's; motorcycles)
  - On designated OFATV<sub>2</sub> or OFTR<sub>3</sub> trails only\*
  - Use Agreement and Permits are required
  - Maximum vehicle weight 400 kg
  - ATV and off-road motorcycle enthusiasts are encouraged to contact the following for information on membership requirements, location of designated trails, status of trail development
- Hunting and fishing:
  - As per provincial hunting and fishing regulations\*\*
  - Portable tree stands only
  - Hunters must be members of OFAH
- Trapping: License and Use Agreement required
- Harvesting non-wood forest products: Personal use only

**\* Exceptions Include:**

- use by OFATV, OFTR, or OFSC members where authorized to facilitate volunteer patrols or stewardship activities
- to enable disabled or infirm hunters to access the SCF during all hunting seasons
- to facilitate large game retrieval (deer and bear)
- to facilitate complete access for hunters to the SCF during the Controlled Deer Hunt only

\*\* Hunting is permitted **except** on the following tracts due to close proximity to urban areas:

- Dyer (City of Barrie)
- Rippon (Essa Twp)
- Museum, Midhurst (Springwater Twp)

- Thompson (Town of Penetanguishene)
- Blauxham (Town of Innisfil)
- Tottenham (Town of New Tecumseth)

**Activities Not Permitted:**

- Operation of motorized vehicles in excess of 400 kg gross vehicle weight
- Littering, dumping or disposal of any foreign material
- Open fires
- Camping
- Consumption of alcohol
- Target practice; paintball
- Cutting, pruning, digging or gathering of trees, shrubs, groundcover or firewood
- Construction of unauthorized structures; permanent tree stands
- Placement of unauthorized signs

**Special Use:**

- Organized events are not permitted without a valid Use Agreement in effect. This includes any activity which is advertised or if participants are charged an entry fee, but does not include organized hikes or nature walks

Huronia Trails and Greenways encourages all user groups as well as individuals to work with the county and to abide by the new policy to ensure continued access to the forests while preserving this natural treasure. It is important to remember that it is the responsibility of each individual user to know the rules and policies of the forests and any other lands they venture onto.

The entire Simcoe County Forest Recreation Policy can be viewed at;

<http://www.county.simcoe.on.ca/municipalservices/forestry/index.htm>

**Additional User Group Contacts:**

1OFSC Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs

705-739-7669 [www.ofsc.on.ca](http://www.ofsc.on.ca)

2OFATV Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicle Clubs

705-797-0797 [www.ofatv.org](http://www.ofatv.org)

3OFTR Ontario Federation of Trail Riders

705-447-3110 [www.oftr.ca](http://www.oftr.ca)

The Simcoe County Forests now total nearly 31,000 acres and continue to grow through strategic acquisitions. Primarily managed for forestry purposes, the County Forests provide substantial environmental, social and economic benefits. In addition, the County provides a multitude of other benefits including protection of wildlife habitat and water resources, public education & recreation, scientific research and production of wood products, etc.

Huronia Trails and Greenways is a registered not-for-profit charitable corporation (charitable number 869134759RR0001) and is the regional co-ordinating body for shared use trail development in Simcoe County. The organization is specifically focused on the completion of the Trans Canada Trail route through Simcoe County, and the promotion of trails for their health, social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits.

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For further information check [www.simcoecountytrails.net](http://www.simcoecountytrails.net) or contact

[info@simcoecountytrails.net](mailto:info@simcoecountytrails.net) or 705-458-4037

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