New OHV Pilot Program Approved for Three Years

March 18, 2021

Lake City, CO – Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Transportation Commission gave unanimous approval today to a new three-year Pilot Program that will allow Off-Highway Vehicles to operate on State Highway 149. This program makes it possible for OHV riders to travel the entire Alpine Loop Scenic Byway, which requires traveling on a 3.26-mile stretch of Hwy 149.

The Pilot Program will run seasonally in 2021, 2022 and 2023, from the Friday before Memorial Day through September 30 of each year. OHVs will be able to ride on Hwy 149 from CR 30 south of Lake City, to the Ocean Wave Drive intersection (MP 73.11) on the northern end of Lake City. OHVs are not permitted to ride on any other areas of the highway at any time outside the boundaries of the program.

OHVs are permitted on all Town and County roads. The Pilot Program only affects travel on the highway.

Hinsdale County, Town of Lake City and Hinsdale County Sheriff Department worked with CDOT representatives to identify specific considerations to be included in the pilot program permit that are intended to maximize the safety of OHVs traveling on the highway. After first reviewing the pilot program application in February, the Transportation Commission requested these safety conditions be included in the resolution up for approval.

Specific conditions of the pilot program include:

* Revised and increased signage indicating the beginning and end of the route, speed limit, and dates when the program is in effect.
* Any accidents involving OHVs will be reported to CDOT within 2 weeks of the incident.
* The speed limit for the portion of SH 149 included in the pilot project will be lowered to 30 mph for all vehicles during the seasonal period of the program.
* OHVs are required to follow Colorado traffic laws and County and Town OHV ordinances.
* Hinsdale County Sheriff Department will hire an additional officer with a focus at enforcing ordinances regarding OHV’s.
* Hinsdale County will increase penalties and fines for OHV infractions.
* Education efforts to inform OHV riders of rules and safety will include volunteer-manned information stop, maps of the Pilot Program route with rules, informational material on OHV operation and the Pilot Program, information on the Hinsdale County and Lake City.com website and social media.
* CDOT will be provided a report on the pilot program at the end of each OHV season, including specific data from law enforcement, CSP and CPW on numbers of accidents involving OHVs on the highway, warnings issued to OHV drivers, tickets issued to OHV drivers.
* OHV counts on the portion of the highway included in the Pilot Program will take place eight times (twice per month) during the four-month duration of each year’s program. This information will be included in the end-of-the-season report to CDOT.
* Hinsdale County will set up a link on the county website where the public can submit feedback/suggestions for the Pilot Program. This feedback will be incorporated into the annual end-of-season report to CDOT.

A similar Pilot program took place on Hwy 149 in the summers of 2019 and 2020. Following the close of the 2020 season, public input was solicited regarding the pilot program for consideration by Hinsdale County and the Town of Lake City for a possible application for a new pilot program. Following several separate and two joint meetings, county commissioners and town trustees directed their staff to work with CDOT on an application for a new three-year pilot program. This application was submitted in January, 2021.