



THE TRAIL OF KNOWLEDGE

Story By Adam Booth · Photos By Adam Booth And Rob Watt

Having never ridden in the single-track famous state of Colorado, I was told—not asked—to attend this year's Colorado 600. Like a kid heading off to college, I loaded the 2014 Beta 450 RS in the *Dirt Rider* Dodge and began a 16-hour drive to further my off-road education and, of course, to pop some sweet wheelies.

The TPA (Trails Preservation Alliance), with help from the Texas Sidewinders MC, puts on the Trails Awareness Symposium (TAS) Colorado 600 trail ride. This isn't just an awesome multiday frolic through the amazing Rocky Mountains; there is a much deeper purpose behind this gathering of hard-core dirt bike riders. It's like the coolest college class ever! The Colorado 600 is an avenue to educate off-road riders on serious issues impacting motorized recreation and was created to enable riders to better assist OHV recreation groups in protecting

access to public lands. As you may well know, our right to ride public lands is constantly under attack, and while it might seem at times a hopeless fight, the TPA, along with other groups like COHVCO (Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition) are putting forth heroic efforts, winning battles in an effort to win the war.

The Trails Preservation Alliance is an organization dedicated to protecting and promoting trail riding. It is a grassroots 501c3 organization that works tirelessly to protect trail access for OHV enthusiasts. The TPA organization isn't paid for any of their work; it is all done via volunteers. They keep a close eye on current events and are constantly engaged in legal battles against those who want to shut down riding areas. They work hard to raise awareness and educate riders in the preservation of off-road riding. The TPA also wants to engage riders who aren't doing anything (or don't know how) toward preserving the sport they love.

The TPA spends between \$75,000 and \$100,000 a year trying to save our sport. This consists of legal actions and paying subject matter experts to help respond to the Forest Service/BLM travel plans and regulations. They donate to many motorcycle clubs in Colorado, trail crews to help maintain routes, and to state and federal organizations that are trying to work with the TPA. They have also helped form and start 10 clubs in the state in the past four years. Every year there is less public area available to ride, and kids learning to ride need organizations like the TPA and COHVCO to fight for their right to use public land for recreation. It is scary how fanatical many environmental groups are when it comes to denying and taking away access to OHV recreation of any kind on public lands designated for OHV use. While the TPA is dedicated to the preservation of single-track trails, COHVCO is a much broader group focused on sustaining the right for all motorized vehicles to use and enjoy off-road areas of Colorado.



THE COLORADO 600

CLASS STARTS AT 8 A.M.

Each morning of the Colorado 600 begins with a group breakfast and a guest speaker, educating participants on what they can do to help. Every morning I hopped on the Beta 450 RS with more ammo to help keep riding areas open. Because not all dirt bike riders crave the same terrain, the Colorado 600 offers up many rides per day depending on skill level. Knowledgeable guides lead mellow scenic rides or brutal 115-mile AA all-day single-track adventures. I had the pleasure of riding a couple of days with Colorado hero Scott Bright (just a week before he left to race the 2013 ISDE) and a few days with Dakar racer and Colorado local Ned Suesse, who works closely

with Don Riggle and the TPA on land-access issues. The long miles, rainy weather, and extreme altitudes had me exhausted at the end of each day—but completely satisfied and happy I was “forced” to attend the event. At this point I’m not sure who from *Dirt Rider* will be at next year’s Colorado 600, but it might all come down to an arm-wrestling match among *DR* staffers.

If you don’t think OHV is important to those who don’t participate, think about this: OHV recreation is a billion-dollar-a-year industry in Colorado, providing thousands of jobs and stimulating the state and local economies. Southern Colorado towns, hit hard by wildfires in 2013, understand the value of off-road recreation, since many

are depending on it to carry them through the non-ski seasons of the year. As a result, most are incredibly supportive of land access. The Colorado 600 donates \$6,000 to the local area around the event, and it also donates money to surrounding communities. All that before the 75 event participants roll in to buy food, hotel rooms, gas, and supplies from the local town. On the TPA webpage is an economic update for 2012 available for download showing the dollars that those who participate in OHV shell out to enjoy what they love. I recommend checking it out, as it can be used as a great example to cities and areas that might not realize the value in OHV recreation.

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Clearly, the trail around the mudhole wasn't good enough...



Slavens storytelling at 13,000 feet.



Boothy in the burn zone.



“So you really like this Honda more than a KTM?”

THE COLORADO 600

A NOTE FROM THE BOSS

"The TPA gets a lot of requests for various types of support, from money to responses to Forest Service/BLM planning documents, etc. What the TPA tries to do is make the work that the TPA has done in Colorado available to other states. If you go to the TPA webpage and news section, you can see just about all items that we are working on. One example of work in other states is the work in Arizona. The TPA was requested to respond to a FS travel management plan in the Phoenix area. We did this at the request of several Arizona riders who come to the C600.

"In New Mexico, we do more work, since we share several Forest Service districts and BLM areas that are in both states. We are also a major supporter financially to NMOHVA. New Mexico has a good organization but not the membership or the financial resources the TPA has, so the TPA makes a large donation to NMOHVA every year to help with their work. If New Mexico is successful in recreation issues, we all benefit.

"The most out-of-state support we do is with the Ride With Respect organization in Moab, Utah. This organization does more work with a handful of members than any organization I know. The hard work and dedication of the RWR crew has saved many miles of motorized routes in Utah and is also responsible for the creation of several new trail systems in the Moab area. On top of this, Colorado riders go to Moab in countless numbers during the winter months. The TPA has accepted the responsibility and challenge to make sustainable donations to RWR, and I think the TPA is their major financial supporter. It really concerns the TPA that riders from all over the US go to Moab to ride and then just leave, making no donations to the organization that is providing their recreation. This type of attitude on the part of riders will not sustain the sport. If anyone thinks the Forest Service and BLM are going to give us adequate areas for recreation, they are wrong. We need to save Utah recreation areas, and we need to work together to maintain all of the great trails that we have around the country."

—Don Riggle, President, TPA

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Want to help? Join or start a club and get to know your local federal land manager. Work with them as much as possible and try to be a positive partner to the operation. If that can't work, then take the approach that public lands are for the public, which means getting active politically.

Support your local club, the statewide organization, and also the AMA. Having local clubs work with their associated Forest Service/BLM land officials goes a long way. You, the rider, are the only one who can save your sport. Young riders need good examples, and that example has to come from parents. Every type of rider, off-road, motocross, or dual-sport, needs to join the AMA. The AMA is our voice in Washington, DC, and the frustrating part of our fight as off-road riders is the lack of membership. It's hard to believe, but the AMA has only has 230,000 members, a strong contrast to the millions of people in America who ride motorcycles. If the AMA had a few million members, the voice would be much louder. The AMA has five lobbyists fighting for motorcyclists' rights in Washington, DC, which seems fine and dandy until you find out the anti-OHV groups that would like to see access to public lands denied have 60 lobbyists working in Washington, DC, to make sure you don't enjoy riding your dirt bike. In order to protect our rights, we need numbers, and in the grand scheme of things, 230,000 members isn't much. Whether you like the AMA or not (some don't), it is the only one in Washington fighting for your rights on two wheels both on and off-road. If you live in or near Colorado, you need to join COHVCO and the TPA. If you live states away, find a club near you and maybe look into starting your own local club.

If all this information makes your blood boil, congrats, you are with the rest of the off-road community! You should be mad, you should be frustrated, and you should worry about the future of off-road riding on public land. The first step is to join groups in your area of the country that work toward saving the areas you love to ride. Also, join the AMA and convince your friends to join. Additionally, when you go riding in an area away from home, buy your gas, food, and supplies in the area you ride, and support the local groups who keep the area open year-round.

The Colorado 600 is an amazing event, and every rider in attendance leaves with a stronger grasp on the

troubles that face OHV recreation access, both at local levels and nation wide. If the other attendees from the event are like me, they bench race with friends and are more passionate than ever about educating riding buddies and getting them fired up to protect what they love. It's hard to start off each day hearing the future of land access is under attack, but the truth and information needs to be heard. It's not all doom and gloom, but it isn't all rainbows and unicorns, either. If you have an interest in participating in the Colorado 600, go to colorado600.org. But don't wait too long; the event is limited to just 75 riders. There are several other events in Colorado for 2014 that support the TPA's mission. The TPA's website and Facebook page provide info on these events, and it would serve us all well to take a second to appreciate the immense amount of work being put forth to protect what you love. As I said before, the current situation will probably make you mad, and when it does I suggest that you load up your bike, pack your gear, and go ride—it will clear your head, make you smile, and remind you of what we are fighting for.

To learn more about The Trails Preservation Alliance, Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition, and the American Motorcyclist Association, visit coloradotpa.org, cohvco.org, and americanmotorcyclist.com. **DR**



To participate in the Colorado 600, your bike must be street legal in Colorado, have a 100-mile gas range, and meet the 96-dBA sound test.

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Cold and happy Colorado 600 participants.