

Sun Journal

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ATV club builds new 134-foot bridge over Little Ellis River

By [Terry Karkos, Staff Writer](#)

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ROXBURY — All-terrain vehicle riders using Gary's Trail, a major seven-mile, all-terrain vehicle path that connects Roxbury and Andover, can once again access both towns without driving through the Little Ellis River.

Starting in April and finishing on June 24, seven members of the 240-member [Roxbury ATV Riders Club](#) built and installed a 134-foot-long bridge over the river. They used \$10,000 in club money to buy supplies, club President Mike Worthley said Friday afternoon on-site.

Flooding this past winter and a large ice floe from a beaver pond upriver took out the old bridge, which was 4 feet off the water, Worthley said.

“We also built a trail beside the new bridge for horses to use because they won't cross the bridge. It's too high,” Worthley said of the 12-foot-high railed bridge.

It was built with 12 steel roof trusses welded together and 120 14-foot-long boards cut in half and used for planking.

“Some horses might walk across that, but it's just as easy for them to cross the river,” Worthley said.

The previous bridge lasted four years.

“We've had high water before, but we've never had high water and ice,” Worthley said. “There was a chunk of ice the size of a Volkswagen that took out the bridge. There's a beaver dam upriver and, of course, that probably broke at the same time.”

He was out riding the trail in January and found the mangled bridge about half a mile downriver and the huge ice floe.



Sixteen-year-old Jessie Kane of Roxbury, top right, smiles 12 feet off the ground as all-terrain vehicle driver Michael Worthley crosses the new 134-foot-long bridge over Little Ellis River on Friday afternoon. Kane, Worthley and two other members of the Roxbury ATV Riders Club rode out on Gary's Trail to show the club's handiwork to Robert W. Duplessie at left center.

- Terry Karkos/Sun Journal

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In March, heavy rains moved the old bridge remains another 3,000 yards downriver, club Vice President Doug Kane said Friday afternoon.

Part of the old bridge was salvaged and used in the east-bank ramp. The new bridge span is 96 feet, with two access ramps measuring 18 and 20 feet long.

Worthley said he was returning from an ATV meeting in Bangor earlier this year when he spotted 100 steel roof trusses at Brown's Welding in Norridgewock.

He bought a dozen and hired Steve Swazey of Andover to pick them up in a box truck and drive them to Worthley's house on Route 120 in Roxbury.

Using the salvaged old bridge ramp — an old mobile home trailer — they placed all 12 trusses on that and dragged the equipment to the river work site, Kane said.

There, welders in the club assembled the pieces, which were then lifted into place atop two 6,000-pound cement trash blocks that Worthley bought for \$56 each from Coleman Concrete in Bethel and drove home.

On Friday afternoon, Worthley and Kane took Robert W. Duplessie out to see the bridge. Duplessie is the state director and coordinator of Recreational Access and Landowner Relations with the Maine Department of Conservation and Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

“I'm real impressed with what they've done here for the size of this bridge,” Duplessie said. “As a club and working together for a couple of months, it once again shows when people are determined to work on something, it's Yankee ingenuity and it really works.”

Duplessie said several ATV and snowmobile clubs statewide lost bridges due to heavy rains this winter. Some clubs have hired engineers to design bridges, which is why he said he was amazed at the Roxbury club's project.

“For the height and no engineering, like I said, it's Yankee ingenuity,” he added.

In other Roxbury ATV club news, they have to reroute 4 miles on another trail because it travels through a Maine Department of Environmental Protection boundary.

Additionally, the club will hold its annual Christmas in July Toy Run on Saturday, July 10, riding from Grimaldi Field in Andover to Route 2 in Rumford.

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Roxbury ATV Riders Club Vice President Doug Kane, right, tells Robert W. Duplessie, director and coordinator of Maine Recreational Access and Landowner Relations, about the new 134-foot-long all-terrain vehicle bridge the club built on Gary's Trail over the Little Ellis River in Roxbury.

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