



AN AMA FOR ALL RIDERS

The Challenge Is Clear



By Rob Dingman

Recently I have been reflecting about the history of the AMA and how we arrived at where we are today with regard to our AMA memberships.

Historically, a significant percentage of AMA members have joined the association to compete in AMA-sanctioned races. Many AMA members continue to ride long after their racing careers end, and many typically retain their AMA memberships because they recognize the importance of the AMA's advocacy and government relations activities as we work to

protect the future of motorcycling. Racing has therefore provided a very significant source of memberships for the association over the years, whether or not a member continues to compete after his or her first exposure to the AMA.

Considering that there are approximately 10 million motorcyclists in the United States, and that about 125,000 are involved in racing at any given time, it becomes clear to me that AMA competition members have played an overwhelming role in shouldering the burden of protecting the future of motorcycling for all motorcyclists through their membership in the AMA.

That is not to say that the association hasn't enjoyed the support of thousands and thousands of non-racers as well, but given the stark reality of this ratio, the AMA must evolve into an organization whose infrastructure can more vigorously acquire and support non-competition members as well.

To be clear, by no means should this occur at the expense or exclusion of the interests of our competition members. Racing remains a very robust membership channel for the association, but it's clear to me that our organization must diversify. When it comes to how we acquire AMA members, we have put virtually all of our eggs in the racing basket.

Motorcycle competition, and the AMA's involvement in it, has evolved. District-level racing and club-promoted race events have traditionally provided the foundation for the AMA's racing activities. AMA clubs have been putting on race events to attract members into the AMA for 88 years

However, this has not been a one-way relationship. At the same time that racers have helped the AMA grow, the AMA's involvement in competition has been a tremendous boon to amateur racing, and motorcycling in general, in the United States. The AMA's commitment to be a strong and progressive sanctioning body helped create, guide and grow what is now the largest amateur motorsports program in the world.

Our hard-working race promoters benefit from the AMA, our reputation, our rulebook, our staff, our storied heritage, the AMA brand and the awarding of the AMA No. 1 plate—the top rung of motorcycle competition in the U.S. In short, the AMA has helped our racing promoters get where they are today

For the best example of how we've all worked together to protect motorcycling, look no further than the very significant victory that you, AMA members, have achieved for the racing community with last year's fix for the disastrous lead law. How long would amateur racing have continued if kids under 12 couldn't buy racebikes, as the lead law decreed? The victory will enable race promoters to stay in business and offer wholesome, character-building experiences for future generations of amateur competitors and their families.

If the AMA didn't exist, it would have to be invented, because there must be a strong national organization whose mission is to promote the motorcycle lifestyle and protect the future of motorcycling. It is important that racers continue to support AMA-sanctioned competition events, and for AMA members to let their local promoters know how important the AMA is to them.

While racing has been a fundamental ingredient to growing the AMA membership over many decades, it also points to a very clear challenge for us: We must become as indispensable to recreational riders as we have to those who race.

To that end, we are working diligently to become more representative of all motorcyclists and to develop programs aimed at attracting more recreational motorcyclists to the AMA—without diminishing the benefits to our loyal competition members

The foundations are already in place. The strong calendar of AMA road-riding events, and AMA Congress, which oversees the framework of recreational tours, rides and rallies, are an excellent resource. This is best represented by the strong participation and industry support of the AMA Kawasaki Vulcan Vaquero Premier Touring Series, the AMA Husqvarna National Dual-Sport Series presented by FMF, and the AMA Yamaha Super Ténéré Adventure Riding Series.

Still, we must do more. That's why we have recently launched a pilot program to organize an AMA State Chapter Network. The intent of this new network is for the AMA to be organized at the state level, closer to where our members are, and to establish a coalition of motorcyclists interested primarily in transportation, recreation and advocating for the motorcycle lifestyle.

Although we hope that the state chapter network will become a significant membership channel for recreation-oriented members, we are not creating a new state-level organization. We are merely trying to organize networks of AMA members at the state level. These networks are intended to compliment the work currently being done by existing state organizations—not compete with them.

Under the leadership of AMA Board Vice Chair Maggie McNally, we are piloting the state chapter concept in New York State. Going forward, AMA Board member Jim Viverito will be working to start a similar pilot in Illinois, and AMA Board Chairman Stan Simpson will be focusing on another pilot in Texas. For more information about the AMA New York State Chapter, see www.americanmotorcyclist.com/amastatechapters/newyork.aspx.

As always, thanks for your continued support.