



FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO **SOUND, SOUND, SOUND**

BY ROB DINGMAN

When I interviewed with the AMA Board of Directors for my current position nearly 20 years ago, I was asked to name what I felt were the three most significant issues facing motorcycling. My answer was simply this: sound, sound and sound.

It wasn't that I couldn't come up with other important issues, as there were — and still are — several; rather, that excessive motorcycle sound is the cause for more anti-motorcyclist sentiment than any other single issue.

Excessive sound is both a road and off-road issue. We have seen riding areas and racetracks closed due to excessive sound, and we have seen motorcycles banned from city streets and even neighborhoods for the same reason.

To quote the AMA Board of Directors' position statement on excessive motorcycle sound, "Few other factors contribute more to misunderstanding and prejudice against the motorcycling community than excessively loud motorcycles. Attempts to regulate sound often miss the mark by singling out motorcyclists with ordinances and laws that are unfair, impractical, and unenforceable. Motorcyclists have a responsibility to be part of the solution by being sensitive to community standards and respectful of their fellow citizens."

The AMA has long maintained a position of strong opposition to excessive motorcycle sound, and was the world's first motorsports sanctioning body to regulate and reduce sound levels of racing vehicles. This means we were way ahead of the rest of the world in recognizing the seriousness of the problem, and our responsibility to address it.

So it came as a surprise when, in 2021, the Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme pressured the AMA to adopt a lower sound level for motocross

and Supercross competition. It seems that the FIM and the Europe-based Motorcycle Sports Manufacturers Association (MSMA) had decided they needed to reduce sound levels in motocross and off-road competition to combat the growing trend of track closures in Europe due to excessive sound.

The manufacturers, understandably, didn't want to build motorcycles to different specifications for different markets more than was already the case,

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as it raises the retail costs for end-user enthusiasts, so the AMA would have to conform to lower global sound levels. Motorcycle industry representatives in the U.S. initially opposed the reduction in sound limits, so we told the FIM and the MSMA that until those representatives supported the proposal, we would not adopt it.

Ultimately, the motorcycle industry representatives in the U.S. voiced their support for lowering the sound levels in motocross and Supercross, starting with the 2026 racing season. The AMA therefore committed in 2023 to reduce the sound limit for the 2026 professional season, and to phase in a lower sound limit for amateur activity beginning in 2027. The FIM began enforcing lower sound limits for the MXGP series for the 2025 season.

Earlier this year, it became evident that despite assurances from the MSMA going as far back as November of 2022 that all production bikes starting with model year 2025 would be compliant with the sound-limit reduction, many OEMs could still not meet

the standard. It was then confirmed that some production models would not be able to meet the standard for the 2026 season, either. Some OEMs intended to meet the lower standard with a kit or aftermarket exhaust, rather than with original equipment.

The AMA sound tests in Supercross to guard against unfair performance advantages, not primarily to keep Supercross tracks from being closed due to excessive exhaust noise. Allowing the manufacturers who had committed to production-model

sound reduction to meet the standard they requested with an add-on kit would not address the problem the lower sound rule was intended to solve.

Since the point of the sound reduction was to stave off track and riding area closures, it is not only the relatively small number of bikes used by professional riders in AMA Supercross and the outdoor motocross series that need to be quieter. It is the thousands of bikes ridden by amateur racers and recreational riders who ride on public lands and local motocross tracks that pose the greatest risk of track and trail closure. Those riders can't be expected to buy a kit or an aftermarket exhaust to make their bikes quieter.

This is why the decision was made to delay implementation of the sound-limit reduction until at least 2027. There is little point to lowering the sound limit standard until there are production models available that will meet the lower standard.

Rob Dingman is the President and CEO of the AMA, and a Charter Life Member.