

How to Form A 4WD Club

DEVELOP INTEREST

The first step in forming a four wheel drive club is to develop interest. The best place to begin is with yourself and a few friends who are equally interested in four wheel drive vehicles. Excellent possibilities for new members are persons who have an interest that can best be served by four wheel drive. Among these are hunters, fishermen, camera enthusiasts, and rock hounds, just to name a few.

THE FIRST GROUP

But before you start securing members, get your club going with a small group of interested and dedicated people. It is far more important that the club have enthusiasm for its beginning than a large membership. If the initial group is right, the club will grow on its own inertia.

ESTABLISH A PURPOSE

Your first formal meeting will be long and technical. But nothing you do that night will be more important than the reasons you determine are the purposes for your club. These will be written in your constitution and will establish the character of your club. A sample of a few of the purposes might go like this:

- To promote the sport and past time of four wheel drive travel in all phases.
- To enjoy and protect the natural resources and support the Multiple Use Principal as applied to public land.
- To promote interest in the ownership and driving of four wheel drive vehicles.
- To promote, organize and hold outings, meetings, runs, excursions, reliability trails, hill climbs, cross country trips and similar events.

These purposes are included in the constitution of many 4WD clubs and cover most of the basic reasons for forming a club. But most clubs will find that their own special area will offer the opportunity to include other purposes designed to fill a localized need.

From the very first your club should strongly consider legally incorporating under the laws of your state. One reason is that all clubs in the CoA4WDCi are required to incorporate. Another reason is that any incorporated club or association formed for the purposes of social or recreational activities, even though non profit in character, is considered in the eyes of the law as a partnership wherein each member has unlimited liability for the actions of the organization.

A corporation, on the other hand, is considered by law as an individual or unity having rights and liabilities distinct from those of the persons composing it. In addition, as a non profit corporation, the club can claim exemption from state and federal taxes and should apply to the Internal Revenue Service for an official exempt status. Therefore, the

advantages to an organized group, such as a 4WD club, in becoming incorporated is that it affords protection for each member from a financial and legal standpoint.

Contact the Colorado Secretary of State (1560 Broadway, Suite 200, Denver, (303)894-2251) for the necessary paperwork.

CLUB BY LAWS OR CONSTITUTION

The incorporation documents will call for the club to be run by its By-Laws which must be established by the members of Board of Directors. Even un-incorporated clubs should establish By-Laws to properly organize their club. A small committee should meet and prepare a proposed set of By-Laws to present to the Board of Directors or the club as a whole. They will in turn recommend changes or ratify each item in turn. This will, of necessity, be a long and technical meeting. But again this will be a most important meeting as all the future roles governing your club and its activities will be established in your By-Laws.

YOUR FIRST OFFICERS

Now that your paperwork is done, the next step is to choose a slate of officers who will make your club grow. No one can tell you who to pick, but there are several qualifications which all officers in a 4WD club should have.

First of all, they should own, drive and be particularly devoted to their four wheel drive rig. Secondly, they should enjoy driving off-highway and camping in primitive areas. The third, and most important qualification in your first year, is time. The officers should have enough time to be able to do the many jobs they are going to find necessary. There are meetings to conduct, trips to plan, membership to be increased, and dozens of other things. The most sincere officer, whose work or business requires too much of his time, is liable to be more of a liability than an asset to a new club. So choose those first officers with care.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Perhaps the most important single reason for the current upsurge of interest in four wheel drive clubs is that it is a family affair. For this reason many 4WD clubs count only vehicles not individuals as their members. Some clubs which have 50 members (vehicles) may be composed of as many as 400 persons. Therefore, it is a good idea to consider this fact when drawing up your By-Laws for such items as dues, voting privileges, etc.

And remember also, that the success and continued growth of your club will depend largely on the ability of individual members to promote the family side of four wheeling.

PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Perhaps the thing you will need the least advice on is planning your outings. In fact, if you have half a dozen or more persons interested in forming a club, you have probably been on several trips together. The thing to remember now is that one of the reasons you are forming a club is to organize and discipline these trips.

First of all they should invariably be a family affair. Make plans to take wives and children along on each back country run. Incidentally, once you begin making your trips a family affair you'll find that attendance is better and the growth of your club much more rapid.

4WD runs are usually set up along lines which strongly resemble the old wagon trains that journeyed west a hundred years ago. The leader (who should have made the run before) heads the line and breaks trail, so to speak. At the end of the line is the "drag rider", "tail end Charlie", or "tail gunner" whose job is to see that there are no stragglers and that no one is left behind due to breakdowns. Many clubs now have citizen band radios for at least the leader and tail end rig so that constant voice contact can be kept. In this way the leader knows if someone in the rear is broken down and can plan his speed accordingly.

Most clubs have rules about staying together on the 4WD roads. Usually there is a central meeting place for the trip. This might be club headquarters if the trip is not too distant. If the trip involves a hundred or more miles of highway travel the central camp is used. This merely means an area where members can camp is selected and the trip starts from there. Each member drives individually to the central camp in time to make the trip.

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

One of the best ways to keep interest up in your club is to print a monthly newsletter. Most clubs do and they range from simple, one-page mimeographed sheets to elaborate printed newsletters. Run little items about members and their rigs. Write detailed accounts of each trip and make those so interesting that anyone who missed the run wishes he hadn't. Devote a special section to the minutes and decisions of the last regular meeting. Be sure to print enough copies so that the secretary can keep a few on file. These will be valuable as mailings to interested potential new members. Incidentally, be sure to include the CoA4WDCi Editor and Officers on your mailing list for your newsletter.

WHEN YOU GET GOING

After your club has been organized you'll find you want to keep in touch with other clubs in nearby areas. Joining the Colorado Association of 4 Wheel Drive Clubs, Inc. is the single best way to communicate your clubs needs and activities, and help protect this form of recreation. All club members will receive the Colorado 4 Wheeling News, and other information about the sport.

FORMAT FOR FIRST 2 MEETINGS

FIRST MEETING; Before the first full meeting is held, the group who planned and called it should get together, go over all the proposals and plans, and select an acting chairman or spokesman and an acting secretary. The prospective members must be assumed to be unorganized and uncertain. Therefore at the beginning an acting chairman is needed to get things going.

The first meeting can make or break the club. The organizers must have a definite plan and purpose to show the prospective members. Otherwise, they will lose interest and will seldom show up a second time. Have a short trip planned and have the By-Laws ready for discussion and action.

As soon as the majority of the prospective members arrive, the meeting should be called to order by the acting chairman, who introduces himself, the acting secretary, others of the founding group, and all the people attending. He then should give a resume of the aims and purposes of the proposed club, the advantages and rewards and then should present the proposed By-Laws and regulations for discussion. Sufficient copies of the proposed club By-Laws should be available so that each prospective member may have one to study. Access to a mimeograph or other multicopy machine is almost an absolute necessity for any club, and typing facilities are a must.

After an open discussion, the meeting should be called to order by the acting chairman and the attending persons polled for their viewpoints on forming a club. Assuming an affirmative reaction, the acting chairman will then ask for volunteers for various duties as follows:

- A parliamentary committee to study the proposed By-Laws, and make recommendations.
- An election committee to recommend a slate of permanent officers.
- A trip committee to recommend trips and nominate a trail boss.

As soon as the committees are formed, the acting secretary (who should be taking minutes of the meeting) will obtain the name, address, and phone number of all prospective members. The acting chairman will then discuss an early meeting date for holding a second meeting, at which the By-Laws may be approved, and the officers will be elected and dues collected. This second meeting will actually be the first club meeting.

It is possible, if the early formalities are short, that some of the second meeting procedure (particularly relative to dues) may be accomplished during the first. Dues would be the first consideration, if possible, and collection at the first meeting will assure the organization's existence.

SECOND MEETING; The second meeting should be held shortly after the first. The acting chairman should call the meeting to order, and as the first order of business, he should call for the by-laws committee report, and present the by-laws to the members for acceptance. Upon ratification of the by-laws, the acting chairman should ask for the report of the election committee, proposing the club officers with their consent to run for office.

As soon as the names are given, the acting chairman should call for a vote on the election of a president. As soon as the vote is tabulated, the acting chairman should turn the meeting over to the new president.

The new president should call for the election of the other officers, in turn, who shall take their places as soon as selected. Upon election of a secretary, the acting secretary shall turn the club records over to the elected officer but should assist until the meeting is over. After the election of officers, the president should call for a report of the trip committee, and the members should select a trip.

The president should then call for any new business or discussion to be brought before the members. A regular meeting time and place should be selected. The meeting can then be held by regular parliamentary practice until it is adjourned. Changes in operations and by-laws should be expected as club operations show need for change.