

The environmental impact of the Rally of the Tall Pines

Nov. 26, 2019

To the Editor,

My 10-year-old daughter and climate activist, Brynn Kilpatrick, and I were discussing the upcoming road rally this year. Every year many cars drive past our place to go to a spectator area to watch rally cars race by. I asked Brynn if she would like to stand in front of our house with her climate signs. I told her she could even make up new ones just for the rally if she wanted to. We were talking about what kind of things to put on the signs and that moved the conversation to air pollution and we settled our discussion around carbon dioxide emissions from the vehicles; not only the rally car vehicles but the thousands of spectator vehicles as well. I told Brynn that if we wanted to put any facts on our posters then we needed to be accurate with the information.

I emailed the Tall Pines Rally Clerk of the course, Ross Wood, and asked how many rally cars would be participating, how many kilometres each car travels as well as how many spectators usually attend this event. He was very prompt with his reply. I also looked on the Rally of the Tall Pines website to see what the typical year, make and model of the rally cars were. When I was looking around on the website I saw that the Rally has a 'Green Initiative.' It states 'A portion of the entry fee paid by the competitors of the event will go towards a donation to the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council who manage a tree and shrub planting program. This donation will buy more than a thousand pine trees which will be planted in the Bancroft area! In addition, everyone affiliated with the rally will be making a conscious effort to reduce, reuse and recycle over the course of the weekend. This effort will be aided by the Town of Bancroft who will provide recycling bins for use by the rally.' Brynn was very excited about this? 1,000 trees! But the next question was 'How much CO2 does one pine tree absorb?' and 'Is this enough to compensate for the CO2 emissions from the vehicles?'

As of Thurs, Nov 21 afternoon, there were 24 rally cars listed on the website to participate. The average year of rally cars entered in this year's tall pines rally is 2001. Most of the rally cars that are entering this year are the Subaru WRX. The fuel efficiency of 2001 Subaru WRX is approx. 11 litres/100 kilometres and, according to Mr. Wood, the rally cars travel between 600 and 1,000 kilometres in the rally. For our calculations we used the average of 800 kilometres/rally car. Using these numbers, this means for each rally car it would amount to 88 litres of gas. Multiply this by 24 rally cars and it equals 2,112 litres of gas.

Mr. Wood informed me that there may be between 3,000 and 5,000 spectators. Not every spectator will drive their own vehicle. So, for our calculations we assumed the spectators car pool with at least one other person. This would end up being between 1,500 and 2,500 spectator vehicles. For our calculations we used the average of 2,000 spectator vehicles. The average fuel efficiency of all cars in Canada is approximately nine litres/100 kilometres (this is from a very quick google search). The spectators will travel 92 kilometres if they travel to all three spectator areas for the rally. This means that for each spectator car it would amount to 8.28 litres of gas multiplied by 2,000 vehicles = 16,560 litres of gas.

One litre of gas produces 2.3 kilograms or 5.07lb of CO2. So 18,672 litres of gas (both rally and spectator vehicles) would amount to 42,946 kilograms or 94,667lbs of CO2 emissions. Please note that this does not include all of the volunteers and racing team members. It also does not include the amount of fuel consumed by Town of Bancroft staff prior to or following the event.

One pine tree absorbs approx. 22.7 kilograms or 50 lbs. of CO2 per year. So 1,000 trees would absorb 22,700 kilograms or 50,000 lbs. It looks like there is a shortfall of 20,246 kilograms or 44,667lb of CO2 absorption. This means there would need to be an increase in the donation amount to the Bancroft and Area Stewardship Council of almost 900 more trees just to absorb the CO2 emitted by the number of cars listed above. We believe the committee of Rally of the Tall Pines should reconsider their 'Green Initiative' policy and at least double their donation to the BASC for future events. Mr. Wood said he would be happy to meet with Brynn and I after things settle down from the rally and have a discussion about the environmental impact of the rally. We are looking forward to this discussion.

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