

ROB SWEARINGEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 34th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Office: (608) 237-9134
Toll Free: (888) 534-0034
Rep.Swearingen@legis.wi.gov

P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708-8953

Testimony on Senate Bill 239 Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

Good morning, and thank you, Chairman Cowles and committee members, for hearing Senate Bill 239.

This bill simply shifts the responsibility of supplying communication equipment for off-road vehicle trails and routes from the Off-Road Vehicle Council to the DNR-Law Enforcement section of statutes. As a result, the DNR would have the ability to directly award grants to nonprofit or non-governmental organizations that meet the requirements for acquiring and maintaining communication equipment, technology, and software.

The Off-Road Vehicle Council is a body that offers guidance and suggestions to several Wisconsin governmental bodies, such as the DNR, the DOT, the governor, and the legislature. Its main focus is on matters concerning all-terrain vehicle trails and routes, including the activities performed by users of all-terrain and utility terrain vehicles. In addition, the council evaluates funding requests and provides recommendations to the DNR.

The Off-Road Vehicle Council has shown dedication to the maintenance and preservation of off-road trails and the promotion of safe and responsible off-road vehicle use. However, it is important to note that their expertise lies in these areas, and not in the appropriate allocation of funding for communications equipment and software. While this is understandable, it is crucial that the appropriation of these funds have the guidance and expertise to ensure that funding is allocated in a fair and effective manner.

The final step would be moving \$80,000 that is already allocated from the current local projects appropriation to the new appropriation pending JFC action.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I will be happy to answer any of your questions.



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

May 10, 2023

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy Testimony on Senate Bill 239

Good Morning!

Thank you Chairman Cowles and committee members for hearing Senate Bill 239, relating to communications equipment for nonprofit organizations that promote the operation of ATVs and UTVs.

SB 239 removes communications equipment as an eligible local project under the direction of the Off-Road Vehicle Council. Instead, the bill creates a new appropriation under the DNR – Law Enforcement section of the statutes. This would allow the DNR to directly solicit and award grant money to nonprofit or non-governmental organizations that meet the qualifications for the purpose of acquiring and maintaining communications equipment and technology and software. The DNR is much more familiar with appropriate uses of this money than the Off-Road Vehicle Council.

The Off-Road Vehicle Council is made up of volunteer members who are knowledgeable and passionate about all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and utility terrain vehicles (UTVs). The Council provides funding recommendations to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for various ATV and UTV projects. Funding can be awarded to a local unit of government or a nonprofit organization depending on its purpose. These projects are funded by user fees.

Projects eligible for funding include trail development, rehabilitation and maintenance, the production of maps, the placement of signs, and the purchase of communications equipment.

The members of the Off-Road Vehicle Council are very knowledgeable about ATV/UTV trails and maintenance. However, the members of the Council are not very familiar with appropriately awarding funding for communications equipment and software – nor are they supposed to be.

This bill does not appropriate any money. It is the intent of the authors to work with DNR to submit a request to the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) to transfer \$80,000 from the current local projects appropriation to the new appropriation for this purpose upon passage of the bill. The net impact of the proposal is \$0.

This proposal is supported by the Wisconsin ATV/UTV Association.

Thank you again to the committee for hearing SB 239, and your timely action on the bill.



Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

2023 Senate Bill 239

Software, Communications Equipment, and Maps for Nonprofit Organizations that Promote the Operations of All-Terrain and Utility Terrain Vehicles

May 10, 2023

Good morning, Chair Cowles, and members of the Committee. I am Lt. Jacob Holsclaw, and I serve as the Off-highway Vehicle Administrator for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. With me today to help answer questions is Cathy Burrow, Manager of the Environmental and Natural Resources Grant Section within the Bureau of Community Financial Assistance. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Senate Bill 239, related to software, communications equipment, and maps for nonprofit organizations that promote the operations of all-terrain (ATV) and utility terrain vehicles (UTV).

Under current law, the department provides financial aid to nonprofit organizations to assist with ATV and UTV projects. These projects include trail maintenance, production of maps, placement of signs, and communications equipment through the statutory requirements of the safety enhancement program. Recommendations for the distribution of these funds are provided to the department by the Off-Road Vehicle Council. The Off-Road Vehicle Council is composed of dedicated volunteers who are very knowledgeable about trail infrastructure but generally do not work with communications equipment or software development.

This bill removes the production of digital information and acquisition of communication equipment from eligible projects normally covered under the guidance of the Off-Road Vehicle Council. This change in the administrative process would allow the Off-Road Vehicle Council to focus on trail development and maintenance while moving the administration of grants for the procurement of communication equipment to the department's Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection, specifically the Off-Highway Vehicle Program. The program currently administers funding to sheriff departments for recreational patrols to enhance public safety and is therefore familiar with administering these grants.

Under the current grant administration, every round of grant funding includes open competition by any applicant meeting the eligibility criteria. Over the past several years, the National Off Highway Vehicle Insurance and Services group has been awarded safety enhancement grant funding. This group is dedicated to off-highway vehicle recreation and has a large volunteer network of trail ambassadors. The trail ambassadors provide an increased presence on the trails, assist local law enforcement with safety patrols, and search and rescue missions. Efforts such as these may be greatly enhanced with up-to-date software and radio equipment. The department does not foresee a significant impact on workload or cost from the proposed change in grant administration.

Should this legislation not pass, communication equipment usage would continue to be funded through the current program. The Off-Road Vehicle Council has an established depreciation rate, as is their

practice for funding equipment. They would be able to fund radio grants based on the established rate and the per hour usage of the equipment. Outright purchases of radios would not be eligible.

This bill does not allocate funding to the appropriation created for the acquisition of software, communications equipment, and maps by ATV and UTV organizations. Without funding in this appropriation, the department would not be able to provide any grants for software or communications equipment.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



Wisconsin ATV / UTV Association
1539 N. 33rd Place, Suite A
Sheboygan, WI 53081
www.watva.org | info@watva.org

Wisconsin ATV / UTV Association
1539 N. 33rd Place
Suite A
Sheboygan, WI 53081

To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

Our request is to change the administration and oversight of this part of the statute, from the Community of Financial Assistance to the Bureau of Public Safety & Resource Protection. This request was done in consultation and with support of both bureaus.

The Citizens Advisory Council (ORV Council) that advises the Community of Financial Assistance grants team, is well established and versed on topics that includes trail development, rehabilitation, maintenance type issues, as well as being knowledgeable about bridge repairs or replacement, culverts, signage and topics of that nature.

However, when dealing with issues and topics that relate to radio communication tools that are used in the field of our trail ambassador work, as well as other vital tools that include digital mapping services and other management tools needed to manage the extreme growth of this activity, it's not in this council's knowledge wheelhouse. We have experienced firsthand how unfamiliar and uncomfortable these requests have affected this ORV Council.

We interact and work regularly with, also providing reports to the administrators and field team on the Bureau of Public Safety & Resource Protection, conducting and implementing the important work of the Safety Enhancement Program. For this reason, and because their primary work also includes radio communications and various software equipment, their team is much more familiar and understanding with these categories of eligible projects and equipment, than the advisory council dealing with more familiar trail oriented projects.

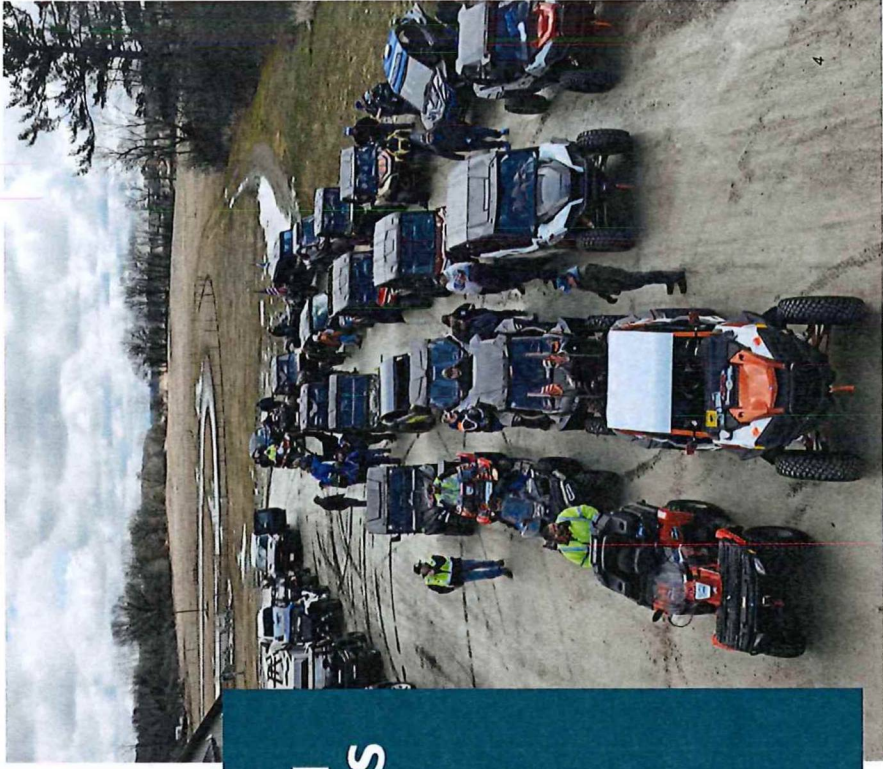
Sincerely,

Randy Harden
Wisconsin ATV UTV Association
President



Safety Enhancement Program Goals - Utilizing a Professional Management Team via NOHVIS

- Reduce injuries & fatalities
- Address complaints
- Reduce violations via education and mentoring
- Coordinate & assist w/workloads
- Help sustain natural resources & protect the safety of riders





Situational Awareness

- 2022 ATV deaths = 13 with 1 of victims being a bystander
- 2022 UTV deaths = 8 with 3 of victims being passengers
- 2021 = 47 ATV & UTV combined
- 2020 = 38 ATV & UTV combined

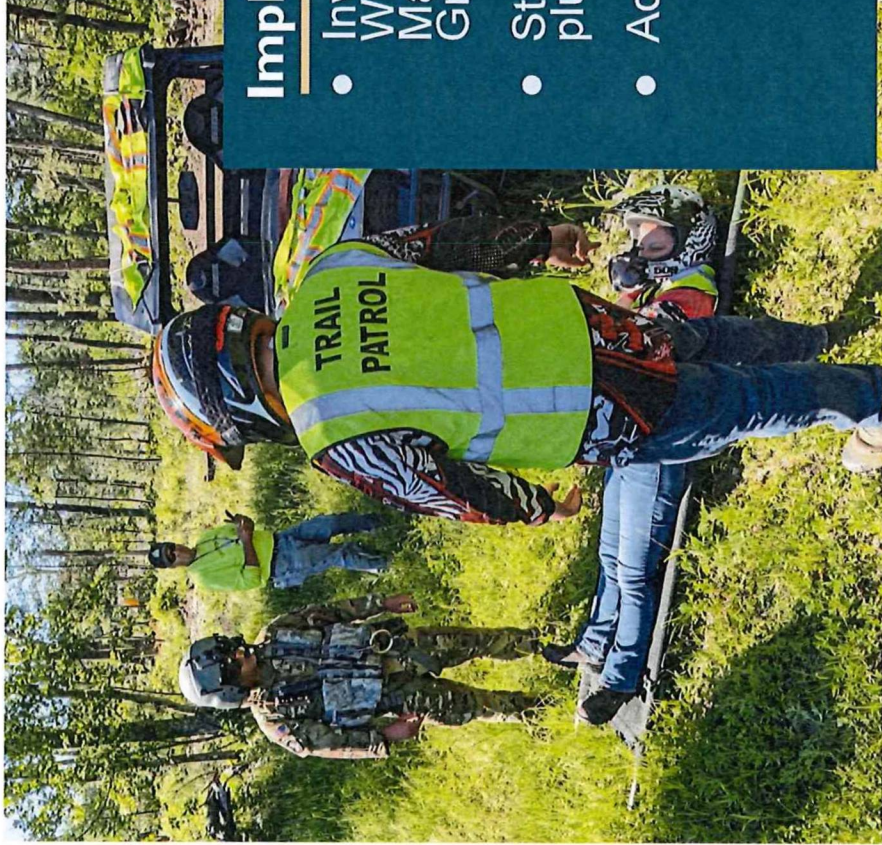


Source: Jim Matthews / Press-Gazette Media



Implementing the plans

- Welcome Centers w/club reps
- Ambassador patrols with or w/o credentialed LE
- Trauma & Injury Prevention Program with Gundersen Health System, others

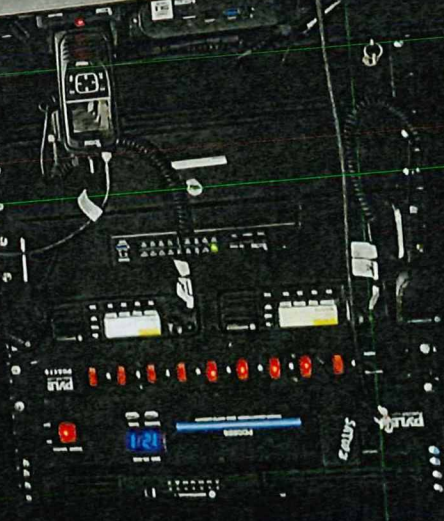
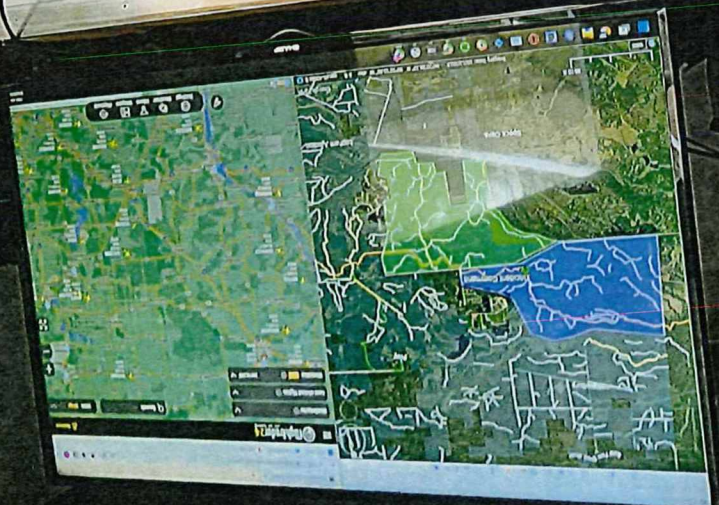


Implementing the plans

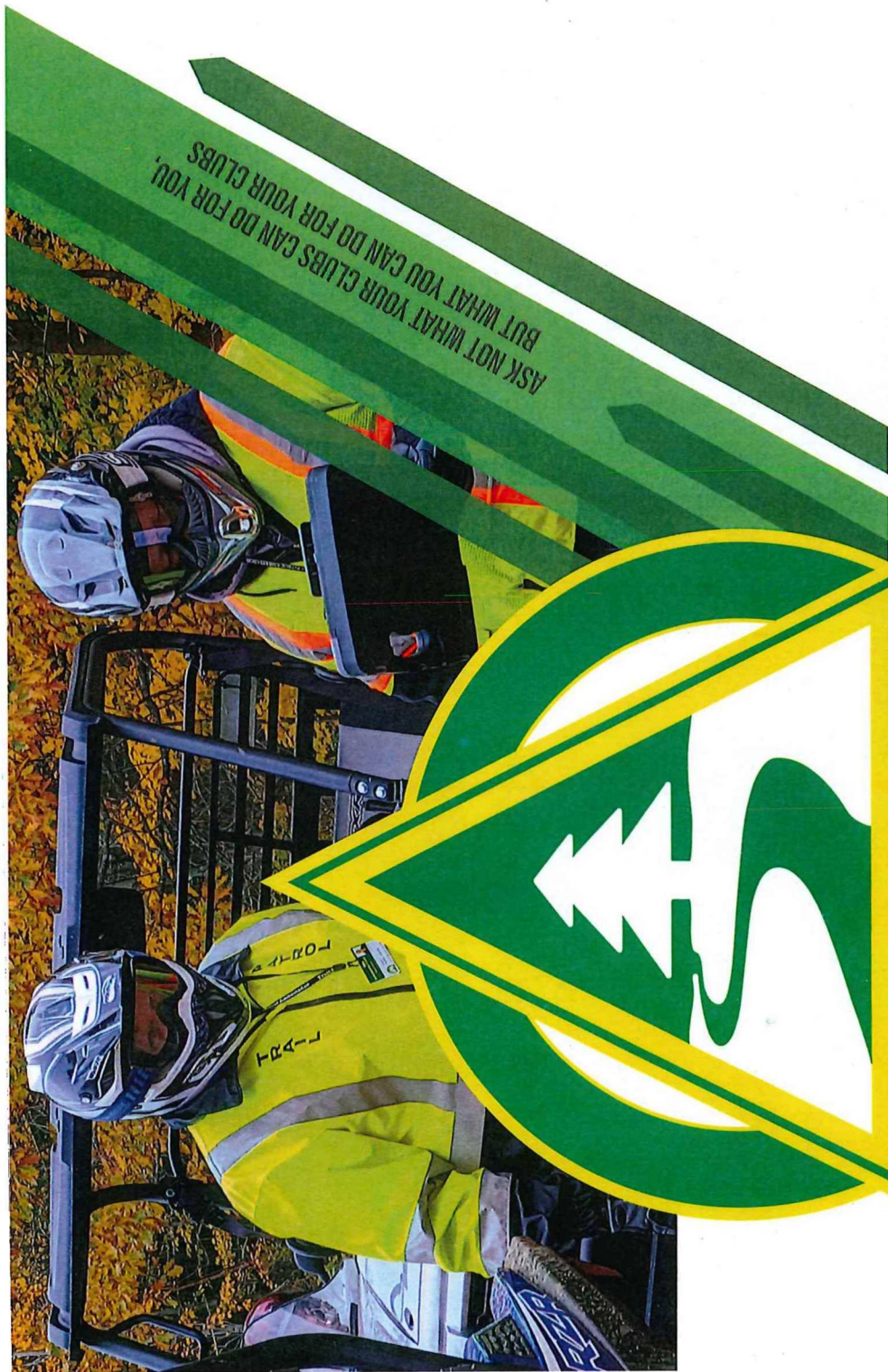
- Involvement & integration with Wisconsin Emergency Management - Air Coordination Group
- Statewide community service plus attracts quality volunteers
- Additional training required



DNKN







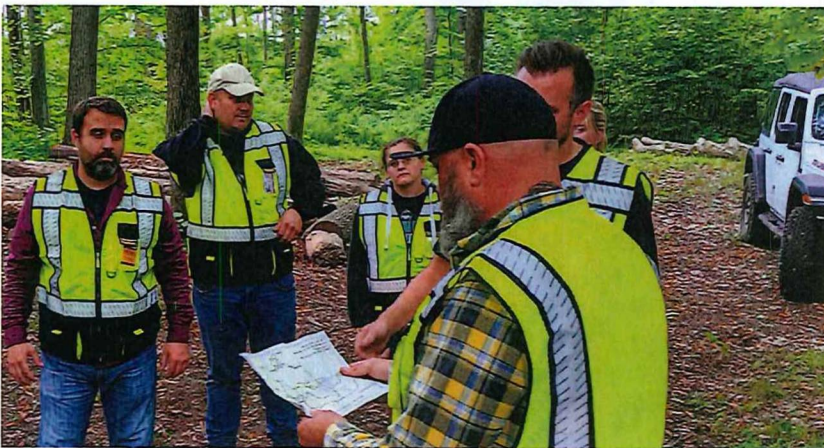
TRAIL AMBASSADOR SERVICES



THE NOHVIS GROUP INC. IMAGE IS EVERYTHING

The leadership team of the nationally acclaimed NOHVIS Group would like to share some of our successful accomplishments, working in partnership with the Wisconsin ATV UTV Association and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

This success story starts with the anchor of the program, our uniquely structured and professionally implemented Trail Patrol Ambassador network of dedicated volunteers. NOHVIS Group professionals provide quality administrative and management duties, which in turn provides the volunteer corps



with a meaningful and worthwhile experience while interacting with other trail users. Our trained volunteers are very visible, serving as positive role models for others to follow. Trail ambassadors provide an invaluable community service, providing the off-road recreation world with real life, personal contacts while providing educational opportunities with riders out

on the public trail systems.

As important as the trail ambassador's role is, our overall program is more than just implementing the trail ambassador program. Our NOHVIS Group core team works alongside many different entities and agencies, always striving to develop a positive direction for off-road recreation sports.

Together with our many private and public working relationships, we promote safe and responsible riding while serving as strong leaders for the sport and industry.



THE TRAIL AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Outdoor recreation is a vast resource that many American's participate in every year. Access to the great outdoors can be done in various ways, however one of the major systems in place throughout the United States is that of recreational trails. These trails are generally maintained by the men and women volunteers of locally organized clubs.

The Trail Ambassador program is one tool these clubs can utilize in their toolbox to help protect and maintain the trails on which they ride (and in some cases, have responsibility for).

Often times a land managing agency such as a county, township or state agency will contract with the local clubs to maintain the trail as part of a usage agreement. The Trail Ambassador program brings credibility and accountability to these agreements.

Our training program can help club volunteers become better advocates for trail preservation and community outreach.

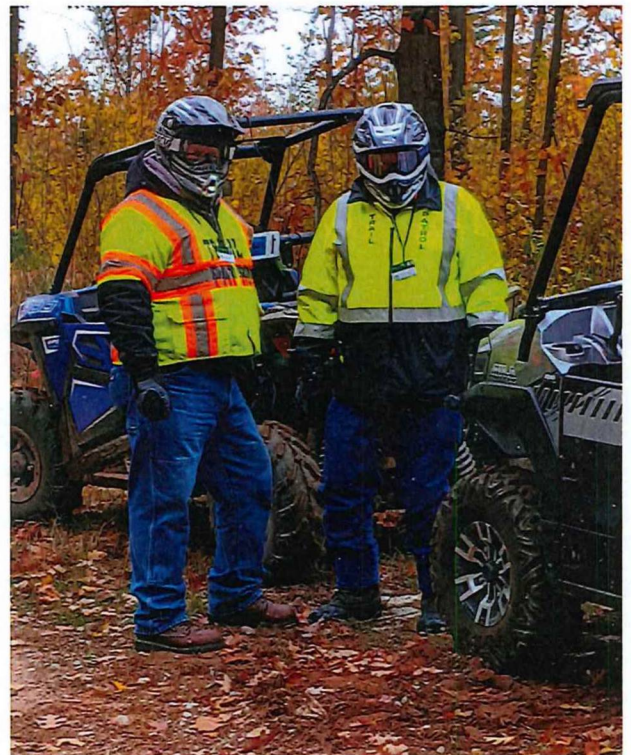
Our leadership structure ensures the current generation of dedicated volunteers have the tools to attract, train and help mold future generations of individuals.

The Trail Ambassador teaches these clubs and individuals responsible recreational practices. The skills learned from our training program allow the Trail Ambassador to perform such duties as:

- Report illegal activity
- Survey & report on trail maintenance issues
- Provide communications for events
- Conduct community outreach programs
- Conduct safety courses for the general public
- Promote a positive image for their sport
- Collect survey data to further improve the sport

The Trail Ambassador program has worked on behalf of the Wisconsin ATV and UTV registration program for the last 15+ years. More recently, our program has expanded to other off-road sports including road legal four wheel drive vehicles.

With support from our partners, the Trail Ambassador program constantly analyzes the activities and policies of the program for ways to improve itself. The leadership of the Trail Ambassador program is always looking to upgrade our program to improve the various recreations the Trail Ambassador program are targeting.



TRAIL AMBASSADOR PRODUCTS & SERVICES



The trail ambassadors program offers a variety of tools and services for our communities. Volunteers can choose which type of activities to participate in, based on their level of comfort. Each product and service is equally important to the overall mission of the program.

The trail ambassador program focuses on four key mission concepts.

These concepts include:

- Increased club participation. Local clubs are the heart of any outdoor recreation system. The Trail Ambassador program encourages participation in local clubs.
- Be a presence on the trails. The Trail Ambassador program has a proud presence on the trail systems it serves. The presence of our volunteers reassure the general public there is a group watching over them and the trail system they enjoy using.
- Increase safety for other users. From reporting dangerous conditions on the trail system to talking with riders about how to enjoy their sport while taking the necessary precautions to protect themselves are one of many duties of a trail ambassador.
- Engage in community events. Outdoor recreation often involves community events. These events help raise funds to operate and often expand the current trail network. The Trail Ambassadors have the necessary tools to help at these important events.



TRAIL PATROL OPERATIONS

The trail ambassadors are a visible presence on the trail systems. This presence sends a powerful message to all of the users, as well as the land managers and local citizens that are connected to the trail system.

The trail patrol focuses on the following items:

- Assistance to stranded or lost riders
- Law and ordinance compliance
- Safety concerns regarding trail & route conditions
- Trail sign issues
- Communications for patrols and emergency scenes
- A presence of volunteers that are dedicated to a positive image of their sport

Our trail ambassadors are trained to not only be a watchful eye for the items listed above, but to be an ambassador of the sport. We pride our trail patrol services on lending a helpful hand to anyone that needs assistance.

The volunteers from local clubs or regional volunteers are proven to be an asset to communities that are seeking to open new access routes or trails within their community. Having a dedicated group of volunteers that commit to patrolling the trails and routes offer an established form of responsibility to local land managers.

Working with local law enforcement is also part of our trail patrol operations. Ambassadors are trained to contact our communications center or the local law enforcement agency should the need arise.







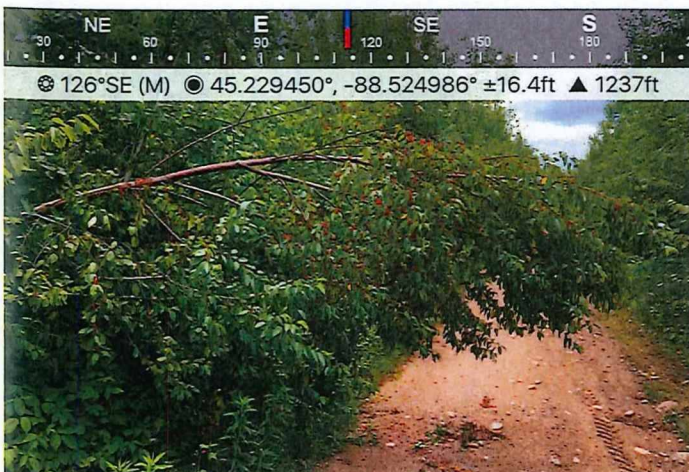
TRAIL & ROUTE CONDITIONS

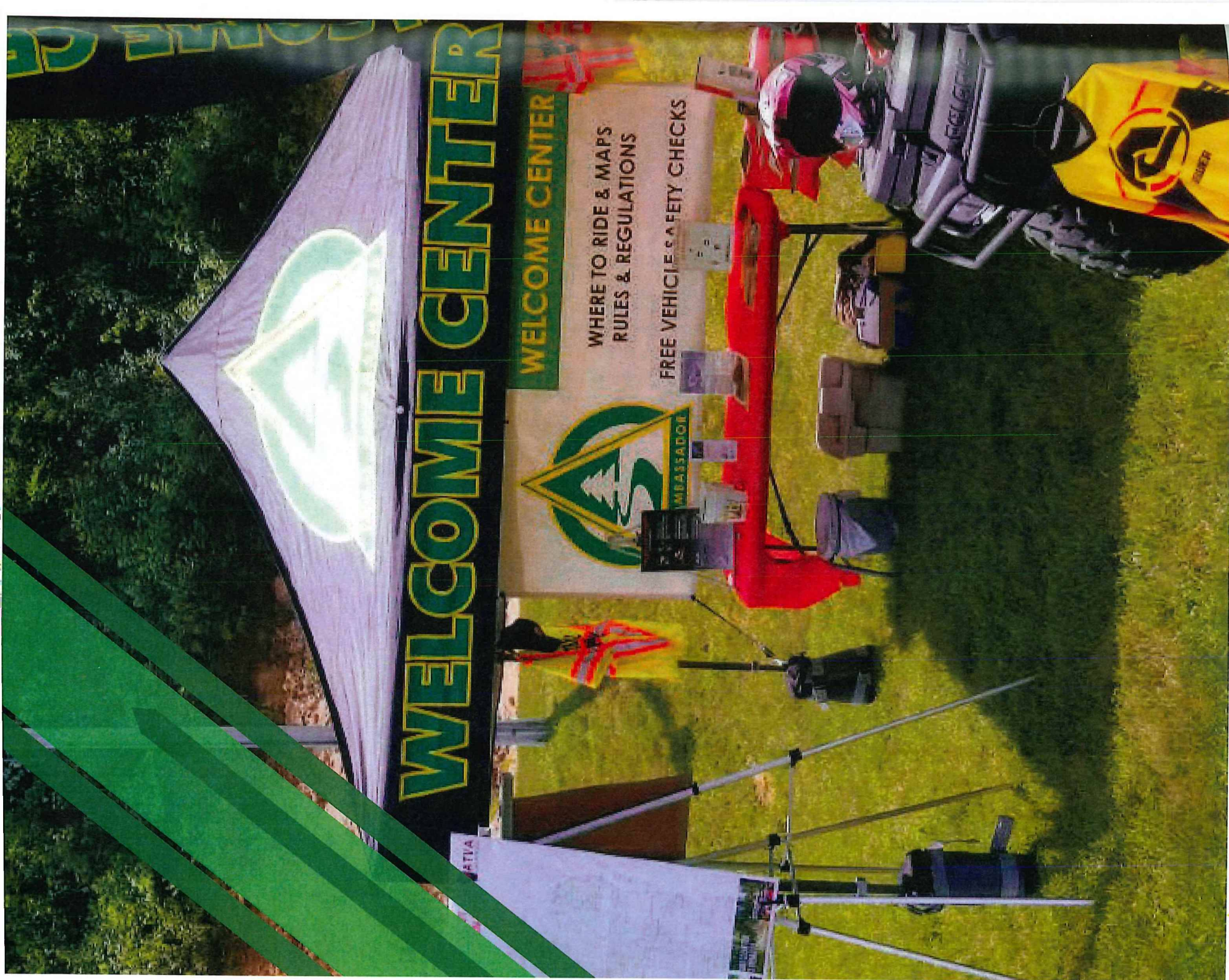
A major opportunity for our trail ambassadors comes in the form of reporting trail & route conditions. Trail & route condition reports are designed to give the land managers, clubs or any entity that needs a report on the following conditions:

- Trail / route surface conditions
- Washout / erosion concerns
- Bridge issues
- Sign issues
- Gate issues
- GPS mapping services
- Invasive species information

During our trail & route condition report, trail ambassadors will examine all of the above conditions. A report will be generated and sent to the local club, land manager or requesting body (with permission from the appropriate land managers).

This information can be vital to any funding related activities. A trail report could be used prior to, or after a rehabilitation project has been completed. This will help ensure all the rehabilitation and maintenance efforts were successful.





WELCOME CENTER

A new feature being rolled out by the trail ambassador program is the welcome center. This service is designed to be setup alongside a highly traveled trail or route. The goal is to provide volunteer checks on equipment, safety gear & riding practices.

Some of the items on the check might include:

- For motorized sports, exhaust systems for sound and spark arrestors
- Registration compliance and general questions by riders
- Safety equipment requirements and safe riding practices
- General directions to service or points of interests

The trail checkpoint is a unique way to setup an area where users can approach the trail ambassadors to ensure they are properly covered. It's also a great way to promote the sport, trail ambassador program and the local club.

Trail checkpoints also serve as a great visual aid for local clubs to the local community. Having a visible area where the trail ambassadors are working and interacting with users of the trail system signify that these volunteers care for the riders and the trail system in that community.



TRAIL AMBASSADOR TRAINING & REPORTING



AMBASSADOR TRAINING

The foundation of the trail ambassador program is the training our volunteers receive. Training is conducted on a local, state and national scale, depending on the course. We offer both virtual and in-classroom platforms, as well as a hands on field day.

New trail ambassadors must attend a multi-hour training and orientation course. This course is conducted by regional and local coordinators, or completed online via virtual meeting or self-paced via our website. In this course, volunteers learn the basics of the program, how to communicate with coordinators, how to make contact with other trail users, how to make a positive impact in the community, how to deal with emergency situations and how to report back to the communication center. Students can obtain our trail ambassador text book in print or in digital format.



CONTINUING EDUCATION

To maintain your participation in the trail ambassador program, volunteers must attend ongoing training as updates dictate. Our training courses are offered from local, regional or national coordinators, or completed online via our virtual meetings or self-paced via our website. During our trainings, the volunteers will have a chance to learn new skills, improve existing skill-sets and learn to work together with other ambassadors.

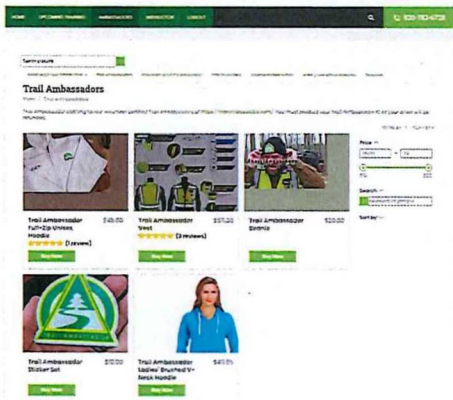
TOOLS FOR AMBASSADORS

The trail ambassador program offers a wide range of tools for our volunteers to be successful. These tools include a dedicated communications center, a private app for Android and Apple devices and a website where ambassadors can download resources and utilize our online education platform.

When our volunteers become certified trail ambassadors, they are asked to complete reports whenever they are out on patrol. These reports help validate their work while providing useful information that our communication center can pass along to our land managers or law enforcement. We offer multiple ways for our ambassadors to submit their paperwork.

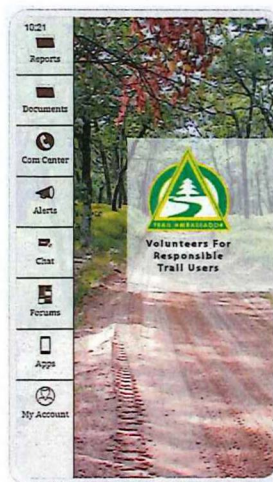
Trail ambassadors have access to our website tools, which include submitting trail reports and ordering trail ambassador clothing. They can also access our standard operating guidelines and other resources to support their operations.

We also have a private mobile app for Android and Apple devices. This app includes tools for submitting reports, referencing laws and sending



messages to the communications center. It's free to download and use, as long as you're an ambassador.

Finally, our communications center can submit paperwork on behalf of the ambassadors. If they are in the field or do not have access to a device connected to the web, the communications center can take their call or leave a voicemail to submit their information.



VOLUNTEER TODAY

Are you interested in helping support your local area trails & routes? Do you belong to a local ATV / UTV club and want to provide a valuable service to the users of our ATV / UTV trail systems?

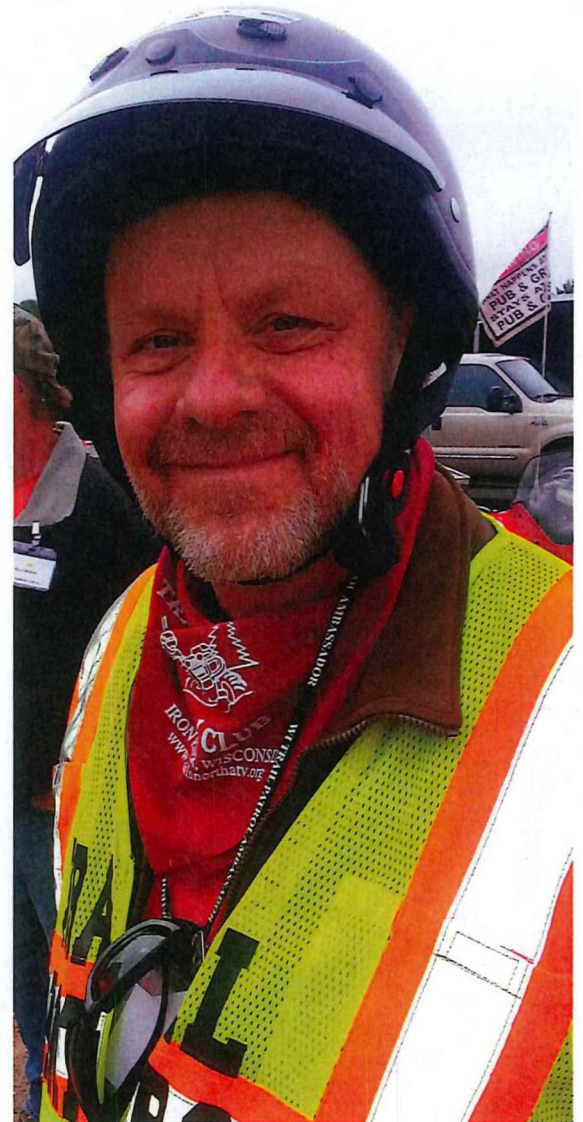
If so, we are looking for dedicated volunteers to be the eyes and ears for our land managers and law enforcement partners.

If you have your own vehicle and the willingness to serve, we want you! Our trail ambassadors receive classroom and hands on training throughout the year and work closely with land managers, law enforcement and rescue services within Wisconsin.

Classroom learning is done online via Zoom and spans two evenings (both evenings are required). We also offer a self-paced platform within our website. Hands-on training is conducted in the field following the completion of our classroom material.

To see a list of upcoming classes, check out our website by visiting www.trailambassador.com.

If you're interested in volunteering for the program, click "**Register to Volunteer.**" Our communication center will reach out to after they complete the required background check.





NOHVIS

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1539 N. 33RD PLACE, SUITE A, SHEBOYGAN WI 53081
WWW.TRAILAMBASSADOR.COM COMCENTER@TRAILAMBASSADOR.COM 920-783-6728