

November 9, 2006

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Sen. Roger Breske
Room 310
State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882

RE: WISCONSIN ATV ISSUES ON PUBLIC LANDS AND TRAILS

Senator Breske:

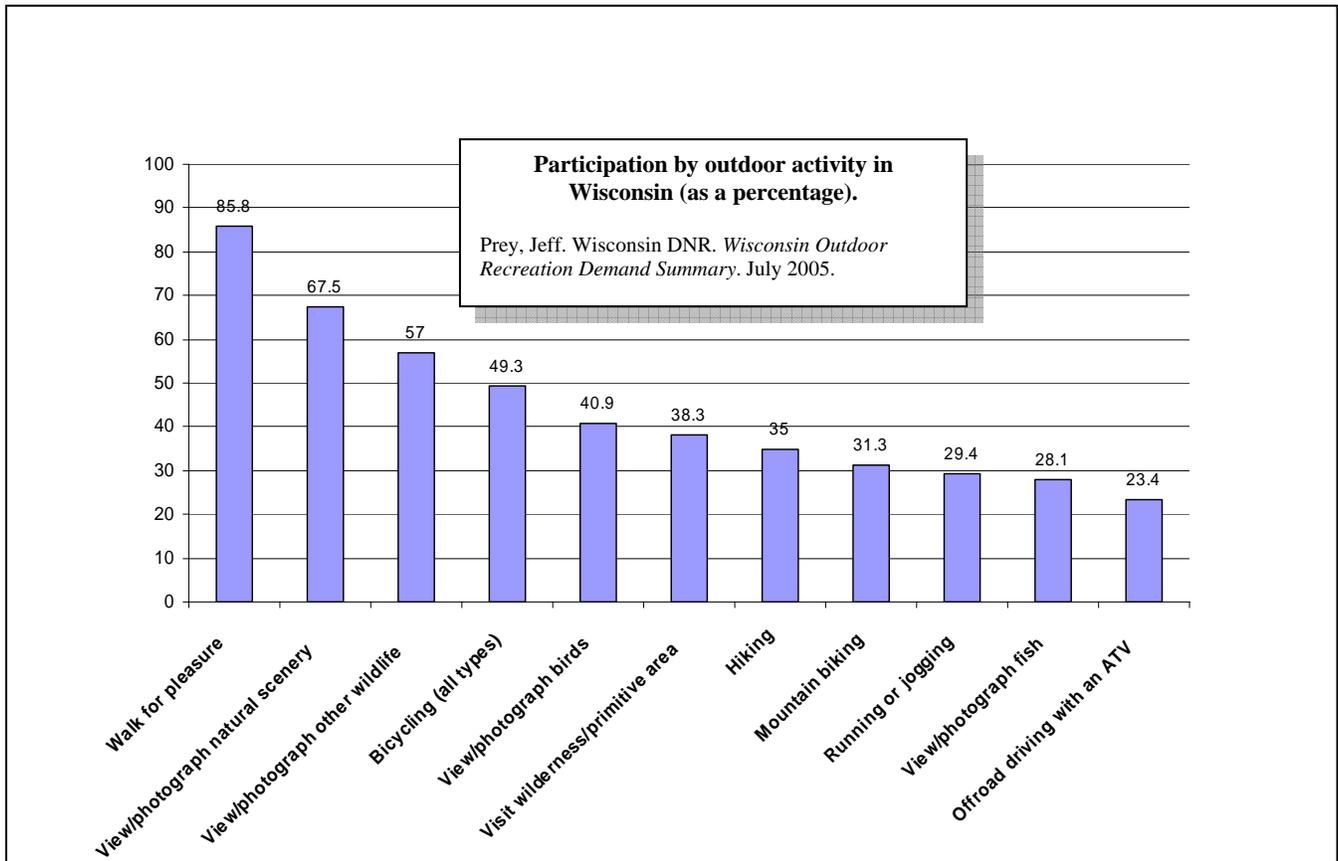
It is with some regret that I am attending another ATV meeting but I am grateful for the opportunity to share my views. As a silent sport enthusiast and member of the Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation I would much rather spend my time and money maintaining and expanding our National Scenic Trail; however, the impacts of ATV riding on public lands and trails has become such a problem for the Ice Age Trail and so many other recreational trails that I am compelled to testify before this Special Legislative Committee on State Trails Policy.

I'm sure it is clear to the committee members that ATVs are a problem here in Wisconsin. They displace other trail users, they kick up clouds of dust, and they damage our public lands. But keep in mind that ATVs are a problem all over this country. No government, be it local, state or federal, has devised a way to reign in whatever element of the ATV crowd that is compelled to rip up trails, rip up wetlands, and basically go where they don't belong.

ATV riding on public lands and trails is relatively unpopular despite the outcry by the ATV lobby and some industry representatives.

- a) "About two-thirds of the ATVs that are sold are actually sold for a work application so if you think of a dairy farmer or you think of a rancher or you think of maybe someone who owns some acreage up in the Brainerd area they might use an ATV to plow their driveway they might use it to clean up the barnyard to put up some fence posts that's where the vast majority of ATVs have been used and are used... ***The recreation market is about a third of the total ATV industry.***" Tom Tiller, President and CEO of Polaris Industries. Minnesota Public Radio interview. July 19, 2004.

The President and CEO of Polaris Industries better know the ATV market because last year ATV sales were worth \$1 billion to his company. So if there are about 300,000 registered ATVs in Wisconsin that means that only 100,000 of them are use for recreation purposes which equates to about 2% of the State's population. I know plenty of people who own ATVs yet don't ride them on public lands and trails. They use them as work vehicles on their own property.



Motorized and non-motorized recreation is not compatible at the same time and place and must be segregated.

- b) “[W]hen comparing the compatibility of all other land-based activities with hiking and ATV riding, it is evident that ATV riding is incompatible with every other land based activity but snowmobiling.” *Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2005-2010.*
- c) “...ATVs travel at higher speeds and cause more erosion and more noise emissions than other trail activities. Using trails established for other recreation activities, such as hiking, ATVs create a disproportionate impact on other resource users.” *Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2000-2005.*
- d) “Use of the [Gandy Dancer State T]rail by motorcycles, motorbikes, all terrain vehicles and four wheelers is not desirable because of incompatibility with the non-motorized summer uses.” *Minnesota-Wisconsin Gandy Dancer Trail Master Plan, Polk County Segment.*
- e) “WDNR’s experience with ATVs on other highly used trails demonstrates that they are incompatible with bicyclists and hikers due to noise, speed, dust, trail damage and general safety considerations.” *Madison-Freeport State Trail: Feasibility study and environmental analysis.*

- f) “[The City of Saint Croix Falls, WI] experience has been that off-road uses, such as three or four wheelers, tend to detract from [hiking and biking]. While it is nice to accommodate all demands, sometimes it proves difficult – and often at the detriment of your primary user [hikers and bicyclists]. Therefore, I hope that the County Board can have the Dresser to Amery Trail one primarily used for hiking, biking and snowmobiles. Uses beyond that should require more input and, perhaps, the implementation of additional safety measures.” Ed Emerson, City Administrator for Saint Croix Falls, WI. January 3, 2005.
- g) “In my opinion and from my experience, if motorized recreation traffic is permitted on the trail then that usually becomes the ‘primary’ use. There is usually hiking, biking, equestrian activities on the trail but they tend to be more localized meaning near their residences and/or near centers of population.” Timothy Miller, Supervisor for DNR Northern Region Parks and Recreation. October 29, 2004.
- h) “In a phone conversation with Brook [Waalen]...I had told him virtually the same comments [as Timothy Miller].” Peter Biermeier, DNR Section Chief for Trails, Wisconsin State Parks. October 31, 2004.

For anyone who thinks that so-called multi-use trails are truly open to all users I challenge them to ride a bicycle on the Cattail State Trail in Northwest Wisconsin. This trail is supposedly open to a broad range of activities including year-round ATV use. The ATVs keep the trail surface so loose and dusty that it is impossible for the average person to ride a bicycle on that trail for any distance. This trail and others like it are dangerous to bicyclists and pedestrians and are a liability to the State.

Law enforcement, property damage, damage to non-motorized trails, habitat destruction and just plain nuisance behavior...the list of ATV issues is long and serious. A get-tough plan to handle these machines is needed. Before this state opens one more mile of trail to ATVs I request that the Special Committee on State Trails Policy consider the following solutions:

- 1) Allocate a portion of Wisconsin’s ATV registration fees and gas tax revenues to repair damage on non-motorized trails and public lands (maybe even private property too).**
- 2) Repair the ATV damage on public lands and trails before constructing ATV trails or opening more public lands to ATVs.**

I don’t feel that I, as one who does not own or ride an ATV, should subsidize that activity. Environmental damage is a form of subsidy and environmental damage to public land is something every Wisconsinite pays for either now or later. Making ATVers financially responsible for the damage they cause is fair and promises to make responsible ATVers and non-ATVers alike satisfied with the results.

Sincerely,

Brook Waalen