

Dear Chairman Breske and Committee Members:

I have reviewed information addressed in the draft legislation scheduled for review on January 4, 2007. While the draft legislation is complex, the following summarizes my response to several points:

1. Rather than focussing primarily on use of gas tax money for expansion of ATV funding, gas tax money should be permanently dedicated in an amount proportionate to actual trail usage for trails dedicated to non-motorized sports uses. The majority of trail users in Wisconsin, i.e., those of us who use public trails for hiking, walking, bird-watching, skiing, snow-shoeing, etc., should also have expanded opportunities to pursue our silent sports interests without interference by motorized uses. Use of the gas tax for that purpose is consistent with the use of motorized transportation to access our non-motorized destinations.
2. ATV damage claims programs should not be limited to ATV-only routes and trails. ATVs do considerable damage to "multi-use" trails and adjacent areas and the ATV damage claims program should be available to address ATV damage wherever it occurs. Claims should be allowed from both public and private claimants. Before expanded state funding is used for any program to enhance or expand ATV use, sufficient funds must be dedicated on a permanent basis to repair past abuse and ensure that future damage will be prevented or completely repaired.

Respectfully submitted,
Edward M. Moersfelder
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Amery, Wisconsin 54001
Edward Moersfelder [emmwindyhill@yahoo.com]

Dear Senator Breske,

Our public land is being plagued by motorized devices that impinge on the vast majority of people who wish to enjoy the quiet found in the remaining natural landscapes in Wisconsin. The proliferation of these machines is causing great damage to our remaining wild environments. Before deciding to increase the accessibility of motorized devices on trails would it not be wise to calculate how this can be done without destroying the remaining wild landscapes and habitats necessary to protect rare animals and places for the quiet enjoyment of people. If your committee decides to recommend any increase in ATV funding, the legislation should focus solely on repairing damage on public lands and trails as well as private property where much damage has already occurred from illegal ATV use. Those trails that have been declared multi-use, that is open to motorized and non-motorized use, have become exclusively motor trails since they have, by their nature, lost the qualities necessary for the enjoyment of those seeking an escape from the motorized world.

There is a need to develop an improved funding mechanism for all trails in Wisconsin. Currently, Wisconsin's percentage of the state budget that is allocated for trails and parks is the lowest of any state in the country. This is shameful and should be addressed by the state legislature, especially when so much of the state economy is dependent on tourism. If there is a need for additional monies to support ATV trails, it should not be done at the expense of existing users of non-motorized trails or our natural resources.

Please feel free to share my thoughts with other members of your committee. I will be happy to share my experiences with anyone who would like to speak with me.

Sincerely,

David W. Phillips
DAVIE PHILLIPS [MADDAVIE@CHARTER.NET]

As an avid cyclist (road, mountain, and trail), I urge you to support Transportation Enhancement and Surface Transportation Pedestrian- Discretionary funding. From what I've been reading, monies from above programs may be diverted to ATV funding at the January 4th meeting. I am not opposed to ATVs and believe that there are practical purposes for them. But I've seen what damage they have inflicted on their own trails as well as environmentally sensitive areas in addition to the air and noise pollution they cause. I feel that there are abundant trails at this time for them and that funding for ATVs should be directed to maintenance and education of those riders. I realize that ATV users have an impact on the economy of this state, but there are far more cyclists and that their economic impact is much greater.

I live along the Old Plank Trail in Sheboygan County and use that trail frequently. Very often I see young families on the trail...youngsters riding their first bike with training wheels. Many senior citizens also walk that trail also. These are safe places to recreate...and we are getting exercise without polluting the environment!

I feel that funding for programs that allow people to safely recreate outdoors in an environmentally safe and non-polluting activity in an area that is designated non-motorized is very important. Again, I urge your support of TE and STP-D types of programs. Thank you for your consideration.

Gary Nickel
Gary Nickel [garynickel@wi.rr.com]

To: Special Committee on State Trails Policy
From: Kay Wegner, Hortonville & Manitowish Waters, WI

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to express my concern about ATV use on our State trails. I feel that ATV use of our existing State trails is incompatible with all other non-motorized use, has a negative impact on sensitive wildlife habitats and is a safety issue for other trail users. In addition, ATV use will cause trail damage and may impact the ability to obtain trail easements from landowners.

The ATV lobby may be very vocal, but I believe it represents a minority of the current trail users in the State.

Please do not allow ATV access to our State trails.

Sincerely,
Kay Wegner
kvasnica@charter.net

Dear Sen Breske and State Trails Policy Committee;

I have hiked and canoed in Vilas county for over 40 years. I am very concerned about the rapid pace of expansion of ATV trails in north woods areas. Each year, more and more people are coming into the northwoods for purposes of quiet recreation. If you ask people visiting the area to name three things they think of when they think of the northwoods, peace and quiet will often top the list.

ATV supporters often claim their sport is compatible with "peace and quiet" values. I think they have the right to prove their case over time, on trails already established for ATV use. The history of trail damage doesn't speak well for their case.

But I also want you to consider another form of evidence: The ATV industry's own marketing and product development. You will note that each year, ATV's are getting larger, more powerful, faster, and better able to negotiate difficult off-trail terrain. That is the promise they give to potential buyers. In many ads, you can see that manufacturers conflate "track" and "trail", selling with the allure of racing and competition. The ATV manufacturers know where some of their sales are going to come from-people who want faster and more powerful capability-people who want to race and go off track. If we can't even get the ATV industry to stop encouraging speed and off-track use, then how are we going to convince riders to do so?

Asking people to keep these expensive machines on a trail is like selling meat lovers an expensive, king sized prime rib, but telling them that if they were responsible, they will only eat half of it. And, by the way, since no one will be there to watch, their compliance will be "on the honor system". At least some are going to say, "I want what I paid for!"

In short, I have three yes or no questions for the members of this committee:

- Does the committee have a set of standards for judging whether ATV use will disturb other users of Wisconsin's resources, such as paddlers, hikers, birdwatchers, and folks just sitting on their porches?
- From your viewing of the web sites of ATV manufacturers, does it appear that ATV's are being built and marketed for the quiet, slow enjoyment Wisconsin's outdoor treasures? Or are they marketed for their ability to "tear up the track", go over any kind of off trail terrain, and "outdo the competition?"
- Is the State prepared to spend the kind of money it will take to undo the damage caused when even a minority of ATV owners buy ATV's to do what they are marketed to do?

Please, do not act in haste. Use existing trails as research tools before you put other areas of Wisconsin's treasures at risk

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