



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**
MINNESOTA

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Environment, Climate & Legacy Committee,

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Minnesota (BHA) values the traditions, culture, and opportunities that wild spaces support. We work to protect and enrich wildlife and wild places that serve to connect Minnesotans (and its visitors) to their outdoor riches. We write to express our support for SF 1324. The changes proposed are not infringing on the responsible use of OHV's on state land. To the contrary, they simply make the use of OHVs uniform across the state.

The last three years have seen tremendous increases in the use of our public lands and waters. Like most of North America, Minnesota's landscapes are now dominated by development. Our public lands are some of the last places to find valuable yet rare ecosystems on state lands managed by of the Dept of the Natural Resources. From water filtering capacities of our wetlands to rare birds nesting in wild pristine areas, we must continue to protect, restore, and manage our wild spaces.

One way to ensure natural habitats are not degraded is to ensure proper usage by recreationists. Cross country travel by OHVs has become a major issue north of US Highway 2, because of an exemption in OHV law that allows any trail that is not posted closed to be used by OHV. Basically this means if there is a path thru the woods or wetlands created by a user it's considered open to continued use. This bill will go a long way in making rules uniform across the Minnesota for OHV use and encourage thoughtful, well placed OHV trails and connections. It also supports the needs of rural Minnesota that benefit so greatly from this outdoor activity.

BHA supports all legal OHV use and recreation. However, we and many others think the time has come for designated trails in the northern Minnesota (as is done in the rest of the state). We at BHA want to ensure that when Minnesotans visit their public lands they are walking or riding into high-quality habitats rich with wildlife, clean water and equal opportunity for all.

Our support for SF 1324 is rooted in the hope that we can curb unauthorized, over country use of OHVs on public lands via proper trail signing mandated in this legislation. Make no mistake, BHA members are OHV owners, users and responsible trail users. We want to ensure high quality outdoor recreation is available to every Minnesotan, and that our wild places and wildlife will continue to thrive with proper support.

Sincerely

Timo Rova and Greg Kvale
Policy Committee
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
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