



**Minnesota Division**  
Izaak Walton League of America  
6601 Auto Club Road  
Bloomington MN 55438

**Date:** March 4, 2023

**To:** Minnesota Representatives and Senators

**Regarding:** S.F. No. 1324 - Legislation to Sustainably Manage Motorized Recreation on Minnesota Public Lands.

The Izaak Walton League is a 100-year-old grassroots conservation organization with 16 chapters across Minnesota. Our mission is to conserve, restore and promote the sustainable use and enjoyment of our natural resources, including soil, air, woods, waters, and wildlife.

**We support the common sense measures for managing motorized recreation in our public state forests proposed in this legislation.** These common sense measures will also support our Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in carrying out its responsibility to ensure our public lands are healthy, and accessible for multiple uses and users.

The two greatest threats to humanity (with us all species that have evolved with us) are the loss of biodiversity and the climate crisis. This legislation will help our state and state agencies address both of these threats. As a society, we all now recognize more than ever the many intrinsic values of nature. We are the first generation to fully recognize the damage we are causing to nature, and we are the last generation with the time to change course, make better decisions, curb species extinction rates, and prevent catastrophic climate disruptions for the next generation and beyond.

Due to the millions of increased funding allocated to motorized recreation, in addition to the ongoing process the DNR has initiated to create 3 Statewide Master Plans for motorized trail systems; one each for All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVS), Off-Road Vehicles (trucks and jeeps) and Off-Highway Motorcycles, it is important that we have reasonable controls in place to protect and preserve our waters and wildlife habitats. Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use in Minnesota is increasing exponentially which is increasing the damage to natural resources, sensitive habitats, and our waters. This use has also caused increased conflicts with traditional hunting and other quiet use recreation.

The measures in this legislation will help to reduce the fragmentation of our forests. Fragmentation disrupts animal travel corridors and creates barriers that isolate populations from potential breeding opportunities. Smaller remaining forests are more susceptible to invasive species, often resulting in losses of species diversity. Requiring signage for trail access takes nothing away from the user, in fact, it helps riders know they are doing the right thing to help to preserve and protect our forests, waters, and habitats by staying on well-marked trails. This bill also protects our most pristine waters in the state and includes measures that may reduce the spread of noxious, invasive vegetation.

The bare minimum of the environmental review included in this measure could objectively identify issues that may arise from proposed trail projects. Requiring at least the simple Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) will also provide important notification and involvement of an interested citizenry previously excluded from these decisions. People care about our public lands and wildlife, and all citizens have a right to know what is happening on the lands they recreate on.

Many Izaak Walton League members own motorized recreation vehicles. This legislation is a common sense set of initiatives that can help our state and state agencies better manage this high-impact type of recreation and also ensure our state public lands remain healthy. We support these measures because they will lessen the environmental impact of motorized recreation and will not diminish the experience of the responsible user.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph Barisonzi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

**Joseph Barisonzi,**  
Vice President

*On behalf of the:*  
**Minnesota Division, Izaak Walton League of America**