



Date: March 3, 2023

Regarding: SF #1324 - Legislation to sustainably manage motorized recreation on Minnesota public lands.

To: Committee Chair Fong Hawj, and members of the Environment, Climate and Legacy Committee

Minnesota Public Lands Coalition, (MN PLC), fully supports SF #1324 as Win / Win legislation.

This legislation puts in place the signed trails that users, dealerships and trail administrators, conservation officers and wildlife managers have said are needed.

All currently open trails remain open, with signs added. The Bill takes nothing away from the responsible Off Road Vehicle (ORV) user and it puts in place needed common sense habitat preservation and protection measures to support the ongoing, statewide robust, multi-million dollar build-out of motorized recreation.

Please see the individual PDFs included in this packet, each titled "Rationale", for a more detailed explanation of each bill measure put forward in SF #1324.

SF #1324 addresses several issues in forests north of highway two where currently users can ride any trail unless it is marked closed, including trails made illegally. If closed forest signs are torn down, these areas can also be accessed without penalty, causing significant damage to sensitive areas. See the Beltrami Photos pdf in the packet. By passage of SF #1324 only signed trails can be accessed and this problem is effectively addressed. Without signs, enforcement is impossible according to Conservation Officer testimony. Signs will help to protect our forests, help the riders know where it is proper to ride and help support our Conservation Officers.

SURVEY RESPONSES from Department of Natural Resource (DNR) staff, Dealerships and Businesses SUPPORT SF #1324 MEASURES

In 2022, the DNR hired an organization, SE Group, to conduct a stakeholder survey for one of DNR's statewide system master plans for motorized sport. The stakeholder responses for this are posted in a pdf on the DNR website.

Survey comments made in August 2022, support SF #1324 measures. We highlight a few here. (1)

SUPPORTS SF #1324 SIGNAGE FOR ALL TRAILS FOR ACCESS

DNR:

- *Improvement of marked routes greatly reduced illegal off trail riding*

Dealerships and Businesses:

- *Trails need more signage or enforcement, Norther Mn has a decent presence of enforcement, but this could be improved.*

Region 3 County, City and Township Representatives

- *Users don't know where they are allowed to ride.*

SUPPORT FOR SF #1324 MANDATORY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHEETS FOR OHV PROJECTS.

This measure is recommended by the 2003 legislative audit “due to the significant potential for environmental impact”.

Again, from the 8/2022 survey responses:

DNR

- *Some clubs conduct a private environmental review to speed up the process. However, this review isn't always consistent with DNR standards and ultimately extends the process.*

TRAIL ADMINISTRATORS

- *Clubs circumnavigate GIA program to do trail systems on their own without appropriate coordination with surrounding agencies. This results from overwhelming process and limited DNR capacity.*

SUPPORTS SF #1324 Invasive Species and Buffer Zone Requirements

DNR

- *Priorities for trail maintenance needs to include invasive species removal and mitigation, and hydrological impact mitigation*

Bill SF #1324 also puts in place habitat and water preservation measures that are critical support for the anticipated vast expansion of our motorized recreational trails and systems. For every project in our forests, there are environmental costs over the long term to consider.

Buffer zone measures that protect waters from increased soil erosion and sedimentation generated by off road vehicles on unpaved roads, are based on [Best Management Practices](#) in use by the United States Forest Service for national forests for Off Road Vehicle projects.

Known invasive species areas must be avoided by designated trails to help prevent invasive spread deep into our forests which can destabilize entire ecosystems.

The local permission measure in the bill empowers Tribes and local communities to determine what is best for their communities.

SF #1324 is a Win/Win Bill with common sense habitat preservation and protection measures to provide an effective means for environmental protection and community empowerment. These measures need to be put in place before any further expansion of off-road designated trails.

**VOTE FOR SF #1324 to Protect Public Lands
for ALL Public Land Stakeholders**

MN PLC is a growing grass roots group with members from all over the state. Our #1 imperative is to balance the explosion in motorized trails with thoughtful controls that will protect the quality of our lands, waters, and wildlife for future generations. MN PLC does not seek to eliminate motorized trails, but rather to implement policy and practices that secure the long-term protection of our waters, lands and wildlife that align with the state policy of the Climate Action Framework.

- (1) <https://engage.dnr.state.mn.us/minnesota-all-terrain-vehicle-master-plan>
Key Stakeholder Themes (pdf)