

Sustainable Motorized Vehicle Trail Development

Support SF #1324 → **COMMON SENSE MEASURES FACILITATE RESPONSIBLE USE OF PUBLIC LANDS FOR ALL USERS**

SIGNAGE

Goal: Help riders know where they can go, protect the environment



Current

All trails are open to OHVs unless posted closed in Managed Forests; **this includes illegal user-created trails.**

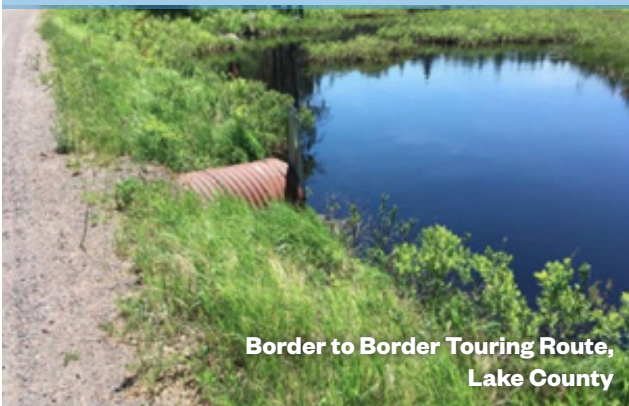
If signs are removed by users, enforcement is not possible.

Proposed

Signs are required for all OHV trails (ATV, ORM, ORV) open for this use.

WATER AND NATIVE SPECIES PROTECTION

Goal: Protect the most pristine waters and habitats and avoid spreading invasive species



Current

No buffers from water.

No regulations about going through and/or spreading invasive species.

Proposed

Designated unpaved trails may not cross pristine waters ranked **Exceptional Use by the MPCA.**

Trails must avoid areas of noxious weeds.

Buffers required for all water bodies.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Goal: Avoid sensitive areas, public transparency, reduce lawsuits



Current

EAW Required for "trails" 25+ miles long.

EAW Required for 80+ new acres of OHV "area".

"Trail" and "area" are not defined by law, so areas of dense trails can avoid EAWs, example Houston proposed "trail".

Proposed

Mandatory EAW for all OHV projects except <1 mile re-routes.

Recommendation of the 2003 Legislative Audit and never implemented.



LOCAL PERMISSION FOR ALL NEW TRAILS

Goal: Put trails where the host communities want them- empower local communities





WHY It Is Important

WE CANNOT TAKE CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE

and now we have 3 DNR Statewide Master Plans in process for Off-Road Vehicles (ORV), All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV) and Off-Highway Motorcycles (OHM), as well as an estimated \$20 million to motorized trails since 2016. Guiding legislation needs to be in place prior to any significant expansion for planning to proceed smoothly and to address all of the known environmental impacts.

- **Inadequate Conservation Officer staffing. CO Staffing** is currently at 1940s levels: the same as 82 years ago. Each CO patrols 650 square miles. Making their job easier is important and clear signage will help reduce violations and environmental damage.
- **Loss of critical refuge for sensitive species. Our most pristine streams** under our changing climate are critical thermal refuge for sensitive species who need cold, clear water for survival, such as brook trout. There are 49 Exceptional Use MPCA ranked streams in the state that must be protected from the increased OHV traffic now and into the future.
- **Sedimentation and fugitive dust pollution** warm waters and degrade habitat for reproduction and survival. Aggressive tires on Off-Highway Vehicles dig into soils which increases soil erosion and sedimentation run-off to waters. OHV tires also generate an increase of copious dust pollution that degrades waters and reduces oxygen for aquatic life.
- **Lack of water quality protection at stream crossings. Buffer zones at stream crossings** and alongside water bodies are needed to protect all waters on designated motorized sport routes. Best management practices based on science-criteria and presently used by many national forests, are buffer zones of 300 ft. for fish bearing waters and 150 ft. for permanently flowing, non-fish bearing streams.
- **Invasive species. Invasives once brought into an area** are almost impossible to eradicate. Prevention is key. Cook County is so concerned it created a new position in 2022 just to deal with invasives. OHVs knobby tires and high undercarriages can transport invasives deep into forestlands and for significantly longer distances, than other land-based sports.
- **Local community buy-in matters. Motorized trails are most successful** where communities welcome them and offer the amenities those users are seeking, so gathering and heeding public input as part of the environmental review process is important.
- **The 2003 Legislative Audit** specifically stated EAWs should be required due to the significant damage potential of most OHV trail projects, for public transparency and to avoid the cost to the state from court challenges.
 - The DNR has already been challenged in court multiple times for not doing EAWs for OHV projects.
- **Noise pollution takes away the “quiet” of nature. The Minnesota Environmental Rights Act** includes “quietude” as a natural resource subject to protection and it is part of an EAW review. A large amount of public opposition to OHV projects is in relation to disturbance of quietude, in addition to concerns about other environmental impacts.