

February 28, 2023

The Honorable Senator Founj Hawj, Chair  
Honorable Senator Jen McEwen, Vice Chair  
Members, Senate Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy

RE: HF 1763, SF 1713: Definition of all-terrain vehicle modified

Dear Chair Hansen, Vice Chair Jordan and committee members,

Senate File 1713 proposes to increase the weight limit for all-terrain vehicles to 3000 pounds. I have substantive concerns regarding this proposal:

1. This weight increase will allow for ATV heavier than a 2022 Toyota Corolla, at 2955 pounds<sup>1</sup>, and larger, fossil fuel powered engines on public lands and trails. Minnesota's largest contributor to the climate crisis is transportation. Off-road vehicles contribute four percent of the state's greenhouse gas emissions<sup>2</sup> and the proportion contribution is growing. Additionally, the use of off-road vehicles is often discretionary and recreational. The Governor's Climate Action Framework calls for reduced fossil fuel-based transportation, improving carbon capture and restoring the quality of public lands to address both the climate and biodiversity crises.
2. The weight increase has been proposed by Polaris who suggest it is needed for electric vehicles<sup>3</sup> and for consumers who want enclosed cabs with air conditioning, heat and to avoid the dust.

Much smaller electric off-road vehicles, often marketed for children, currently exist and weigh about 800 pounds.<sup>4</sup> However, large E-ATV will have more power, force and torque which will further increase soil erosion, sedimentation into surface waters and dust pollution to the air. See photos below. Cold water fish species, such as the state-designated fish, the Walleye, Tullibee and Brook Trout need cold, clean water for survival.

3. Trail maintenance is already an issue. The MN DNR states a \$177M trail maintenance backlog<sup>5</sup> and ATV riders themselves state, "Maintenance is a big issue. Especially with the big new machines. They have so much power they can really tear up a trail if people aren't careful".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 2022 Toyota Corolla Specs, Edmunds.com, <https://www.edmunds.com/toyota/corolla/2022/features-specs/>

<sup>2</sup> Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Greenhouse gas emissions data, <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/mpca.data.services/viz/GHGmissioninventory/GHGsummarystory>, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Electrification of vehicles alone will not solve the climate crisis. In Minnesota, forty-six percent of in-state electrification came from coal and natural gas with 24% from nuclear power. Minnesota Profile Analysis, U.S. Energy Information Administration, <https://www.eia.gov/state/analysis.php?sid=MN#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20renewables%20accounted%20for,and%20natural%20gas%20contributed%2021%25>, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Web Bike World, Best electric ATV, <https://www.webbikeworld.com/best-electric-atvs/>, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> MN DNR, Ten-year capital asset need, p15, 2019, <https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/legislativeinfo/policy-budget-factsheets/2019/10yr-cap-asset-plan2019.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> New Prospector ATV spur joins growing Northland trail network, Duluth News Tribune, Jul 5, 2020, <https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/sports/new-prospector-atv-spur-joins-growing-northland-trail-network>

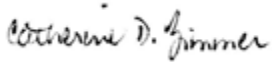
4. Public comments to the 2022 Star Tribune article regarding bigger and heavier ATV overwhelmingly opposed the increase.<sup>7</sup> In the same article, MN DNR staff expressed concerns as the current trails may not withstand heavier vehicles.
5. Wisconsin DNR opposed a weight increase out of safety concerns for smaller vehicle users, increased trail maintenance, shortened trail life and the need to re-engineer the trails more like roads.<sup>8</sup>
6. The Wisconsin County Forests Association also opposed the increase stating, "We feel the decision of adjusting ATV/UTV weight limits should not be driven by what machine manufacturers want but by what is best for the resource and by the dedicated professionals who care for it.

" Any increase in the weight limits must be matched with sufficient increase in trail maintenance and law enforcement funding."<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, I invite you to view the enclosed photos of the types of ride encouraged by ATV users and the damage to public lands as a result.

In closing, I respectfully request you deny the weight increase and oppose SF 1713. Please protect forests and public lands, they are worth it.

Sincerely,



Catherine Zimmer  
St. Paul, MN 55104

ATV Trails in Minnesota



<sup>7</sup> Minneapolis Star Tribune, Minnesota lawmakers consider allowing bigger, heavier ATVs: A proposed law would allow ATVs to be as heavy as some sedans, May 7 2022, <https://www.startribune.com/minnesota-lawmakers-consider-allowing-bigger-heavier-atvs/600171377/>

<sup>8</sup> Wisconsin assembly, hearing testimony AB-265, June 8 2021, [https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lc/hearing\\_testimony\\_and\\_materials/2021/ab265/ab0265\\_2021\\_06\\_08.pdf](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lc/hearing_testimony_and_materials/2021/ab265/ab0265_2021_06_08.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.