



MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF ENFORCEMENT

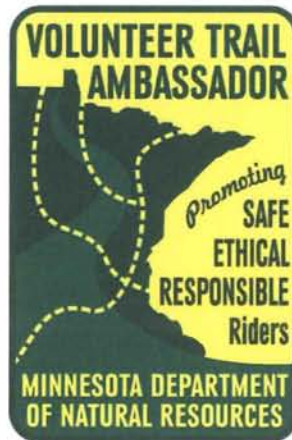


2011

Off-Highway Vehicle Safety and Conservation Program

Grant Report

(Trail Ambassador Program)



Report to the Minnesota Legislature

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE SAFETY AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM
EXPENDITURES AND OUTCOMES OF GRANTS

2009 CHAPTER 37(SF 2123), Article 1, Section 4, Subdivision 8

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STATUTORY REQUIREMENT: OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE SAFETY AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM EXPENDITURES AND OUTCOMES OF GRANTS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to comply with Laws, 2009 CHAPTER 37(SF 2123), Article 1, Section 4, subdivision 8.

\$250,000 the first year and \$250,000 the second year are from the all-terrain vehicle account for grants to qualifying organizations to assist in safety and environmental education and monitoring trails on public lands under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.9011. Grants issued under this paragraph: (1) must be issued through a formal agreement with the organization; and (2) must not be used as a substitute for traditional spending by the organization. **By December 15 each year, an organization receiving a grant under this paragraph shall report to the commissioner with details on expenditures and outcomes from the grant. By January 15, 2011, the commissioner shall report on the expenditures and outcomes of the grants to the chairs and ranking minority members of the natural resources policy and finance committees and divisions.** Of this appropriation, \$25,000 each year is for administration of these grants.

Administrative Report Preparation Costs: In accordance with Minnesota Statute 3.197, the following costs are associated with the research, development and delivery of this report as required by Laws, 2009 Chapter 37, Article 1 Section 4, subdivision 8.

Staff Costs: 21 research hours at \$18.80 per hour OSI time = \$394.80.

33 research and development hours at \$44.22 per hour

Program Manager time = \$1,459.26. Total Staff Cost: \$1854.06

Printing, Office supplies and materials: 19 page report, 100 copies at .20 per page color/two-sided. Total \$380.00.

Total DNR Preparation cost: \$2,234.06

Program Establishment and Guidelines for Training

84.9011 OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE SAFETY AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Subdivision 1. Creation.

The commissioner of natural resources shall establish a program to promote the safe and responsible operation of off-highway vehicles in a manner that does not harm the environment.

Subd. 2. Agreements.

(a) The commissioner shall enter into agreements with organizations for volunteer services that promote the safe and responsible operation of off-highway vehicles in a manner that does not harm the environment to maintain, make improvements to, and monitor trails on state forest land and other public lands. The organizations shall promote the operation of off-highway vehicles in a safe and responsible manner that complies with the laws and rules that relate to the operation of off-highway vehicles.

(b) The organizations may provide assistance to the department in locating, recruiting, and training instructors for off-highway vehicle training programs.

(c) The commissioner may provide assistance to enhance the comfort and safety of volunteers and to facilitate the implementation and administration of the safety and conservation program.

(d) The commissioner shall establish standards, train, and certify organizations and individuals participating as volunteers under this section. The training shall include:

- (1) the identification of invasive species;
- (2) correctly reporting the location of invasive species; and
- (3) basic global positioning system operation.

Subd. 3. Worker displacement prohibited.

The commissioner may not enter into any agreement that has the purpose of or results in the displacement of public employees by volunteers participating in the off-highway safety and conservation program under this section. The commissioner must certify to the appropriate bargaining agent that the work performed by a volunteer will not result in the displacement of currently employed workers or workers on seasonal layoff or layoff from a substantially equivalent position, including partial displacement such as reduction in hours of nonovertime work, wages, or other employment benefits.

Subd. 4. Off-Highway Vehicle Safety Advisory Council.

The commissioner of natural resources shall appoint an Off-Highway Vehicle Safety Advisory Council to advise the commissioner on:

- (1) off-highway vehicle safety; and
- (2) standards and certification for organizations and individuals participating as volunteers under this section.



VOLUNTEER TRAIL AMBASSADOR PROGRAM HISTORY

In October of 2007, the Division of Enforcement, Safety Training Section was tasked with creating, implementing and managing the Trail Ambassador program. This was done through a cooperative effort between Enforcement, Trails and Waterways, and Forestry Divisions. Trail Ambassadors are specially trained volunteers, sponsored by qualifying organizations, who play a critical role in assisting land managers efforts to provide a recognizable presence on the lands they enjoy while providing a positive and informative role model for fellow Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) and trail users. Volunteer ambassadors are responsible for greeting fellow outdoor enthusiasts, educating trail users, giving minor aid in emergencies, and providing useful information about responsible OHV use on public lands.

In February of 2008, the first Volunteer Trail Ambassadors received training, followed by several other training sessions, bringing the total of Ambassadors trained and ready to monitor trails in 2008 to 69. In 2008, thirteen qualifying organizations who sponsored two or more trained Ambassadors applied for trail monitoring grants. In 2009, additional training was offered and the complement of Trail Ambassadors grew to 140 with 18 qualifying organizations receiving trail monitoring grants. Training was offered again in 2010 and the number of Ambassadors available to monitor trails grew to 173 with 19 qualifying organizations receiving trail monitoring grants.

The annual expenditure allotted by the Legislature out of the Recreational Vehicle account for the Trail Ambassador Program is \$250,000.00. The amount of funds available for Grants to qualifying organizations is up to \$225,000.00.

\$25,000.00 is allotted specifically for Grant Administration. This allotment is used to partially fund a clerical position within the Division of Enforcement that manages the program administration. These duties involve processing grant requests, awarding grants, tracking eligible Trail Ambassadors, collecting and monitoring training records, processing and data entry of Trail Logs, tracking grant hours, processing mid and end of season grant reimbursements, processing grant expenditure forms, coordinating Ambassador and Advisory Council meetings, distribution of Trail Logs to the appropriate DNR Division and day to day contact with Grant Managers and Ambassadors.

Grant amounts to qualifying organizations are based on proposed monitoring hours to be provided by the Ambassadors sponsored by the organization. However, grants are paid only for actual monitoring hours. Each qualifying organization needs to designate a Grant Manager from their organization who was responsible for handling trail logs and documenting expenses relate to Ambassadors monitoring trails. Grant amounts vary

greatly and are usually dependent on the number of Trail Ambassadors within a qualifying organization.

Grant Managers must provide logs to program staff within 48 hours of completion of monitoring. The information gathered on the Trail Logs is entered in a division data base. Trail Logs that need additional attention are forwarded to designated representatives of Trail and Waterways, Forestry or Enforcement Staff.

Grants are paid twice in a monitoring season. The first payment is paid on or about August 1st and is based on actual hours of monitoring from May 1st thru July 31st. The second payment is made at the end of the monitoring season which is October 31st. Again the payment is based on actual hours of monitoring from August 1st thru October 31st.

A formula of \$17.00 dollars per hour of monitoring and \$11.00 for administrative time for every eight hours of actual monitoring time per Ambassador was established. This is the basis for grant payments. Grant reimbursement rates are based on current reimbursement rates from other Departmental grant programs.

By December 15 of each year, an organization receiving a grant under this program must report to the commissioner with details on expenditures and outcomes from the grant.

Expenditures are reported through a standard report form provided by the Division of Enforcement. Outcomes are gathered throughout the monitoring season by compiling information provided by the Trail Ambassadors Trail Logs.

The Trail Ambassador Program was nationally recognized at the 2009 National Off Highway Vehicle Conservation Council annual awards.

The Trail Ambassador Program is recognized nationally as a model program for other states considering this approach to off highway vehicle education, safety and monitoring.

AMBASSADOR AND QUALIFYING ORGANIZATIONS REQUIREMENTS

Individuals interested in volunteering for the Trail Ambassador program must meet the following requirements.

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Be an active Certified MN DNR Volunteer Youth ATV Safety Training Instructor
- Submit to a thorough background investigation
- Possess a valid driver's license
- Complete the MN DNR ATV Safety Training CD
- Complete a 'Trail Ambassador' training session
- Be sponsored by a 'Qualified Organization'

Qualified organizations or sponsors must meet the following requirements:

- Qualified organizations, or sponsors, are the local area OHV clubs. These committed groups actively work with multiple DNR Divisions to improve our state trail systems and deliver youth safety programs in their local communities.
- Qualified organizations are required to be members in good standing of one of the following state associations:

Amateur Riders Motorcycle Association (ARMCA);

All-Terrain Vehicle Association of Minnesota (ATVAM);

Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association (MnUSA);

Minnesota 4-Wheel Drive Association (MN4WDA).

Qualifying organizations must be willing participants in the Trail Ambassador grant program. Grants issued under this program are issued through a formal agreement with the organization and must not be used as a substitute for traditional spending by the organization.

MONITORING PRIORITIES AND SCHEDULING

Information relating to known OHV 'Intensive Use Areas' was gathered from three DNR divisions - Forestry, Parks and Trails and Enforcement. From that information, state forest lands with designated trails and other public lands open to OHV use that experience high use or have environmental impact concerns were deemed priority. Other volunteering opportunities may include working lower priority trails or public lands during special events.

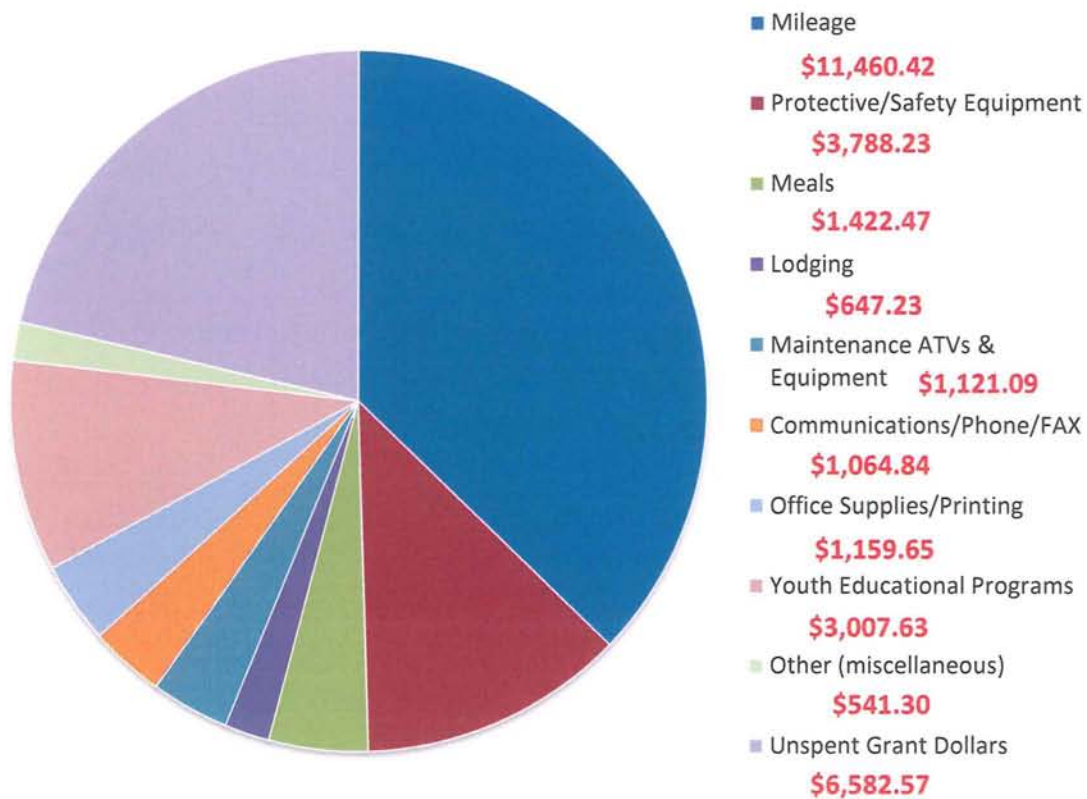
OHV trail data was reevaluated in 2009 and a trail ranking system was identified. Ranking determination was based on the concerns listed above, in addition to the amount of verbal contacts, machines and violations recorded. Trails were ranked accordingly: A trails-High Priority; B trails-Medium Priority; and C trails-Low Priority. Trail Ambassadors are required to schedule their monitoring time correspondingly.

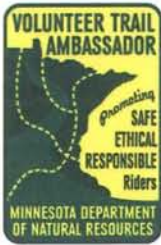
Over the years Off-Highway Vehicle activity data has consistently indicated that the majority of accidents and violations occur Thursday thru Monday between the hours of 11:00 am and 8:00 pm. These are the days of the week and times of the day that are the primary focus reflected in the scheduling of Trail Ambassadors. This data is a good representative of 'peak' use days and times. These are the days of the week and times of the day that will be the 'preferred' scheduling for Trail Ambassadors. They must also schedule the dates and times of their volunteer trail work ahead of time through the sponsoring club's grant manager.



2008 Trail Ambassador Grant Awards and Reported Expenditures

The total amount of all Grants paid to 13 qualifying organizations in 2008 was \$30,795.43. In 2008, Grant Managers reported the following combined expenditures of \$24,212.86 in support of the Trail Ambassador Program. A carry-over of \$6,582.57 was shared by several sponsoring organizations for expenses outside of the monitoring season.

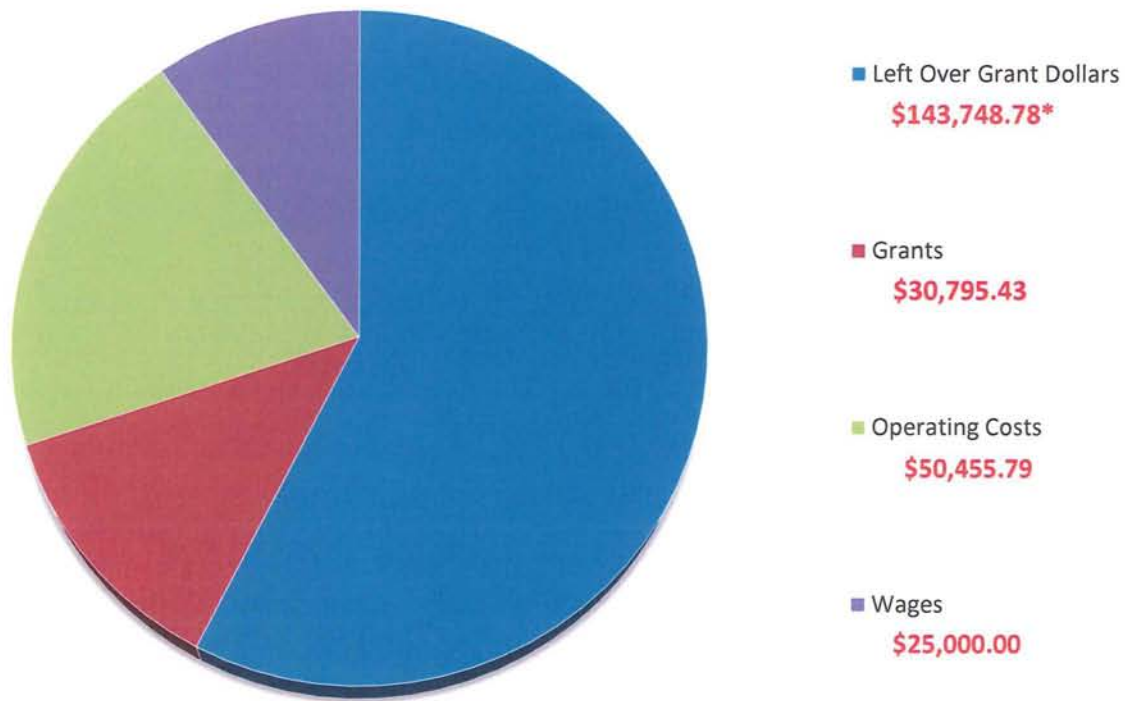




2008 Total Program Expenditures

In addition to the Grants awarded in the 2008, the Division had considerable program expenses involved in supporting the Trail Ambassador Program. This included program development, training, basic equipment, printing, meals and safety equipment. Some of the start-up equipment costs included purchasing a basic kit that was supplied to each Ambassador during training which included the following: GPS units, Gear Bags, Clip Boards, Flagging Tape, ANSI Vest, First Aid Kits and program forms. Below is a breakdown of actual 2008 cost for the first year (start-up) of the Trail Ambassador Program

This Chart is based on the full program funding of \$250,000.00.

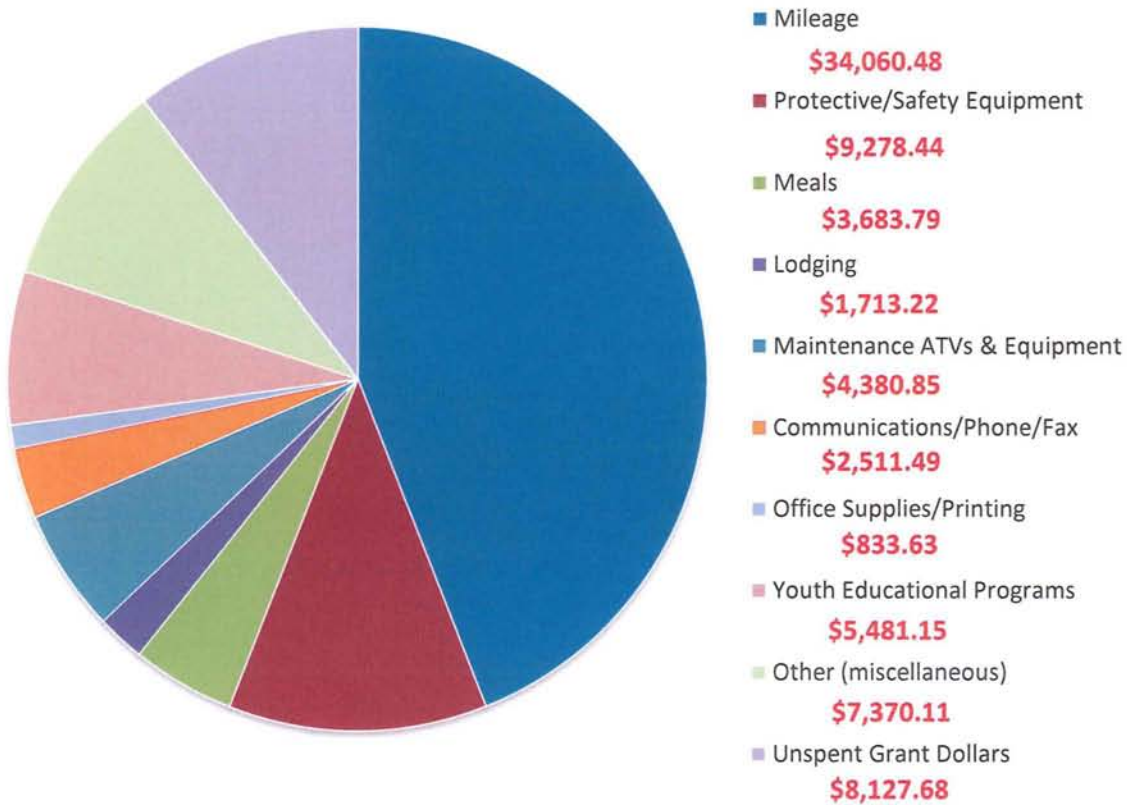


***At the end of the first year of the Program, \$143,748.78 was returned to the Off Highway Vehicle account.**



2009 Trail Ambassador Grant Awards and Expenditures

The total amount of all Grants paid to 18 qualifying organizations in 2009 was \$77,440.84. In 2009, Grant Managers reported the following combined expenditures of \$69,313.16 in support of the Trail Ambassador Program. A carry-over of \$8,127.68 was shared by several sponsoring organizations for expenses outside of the monitoring season.

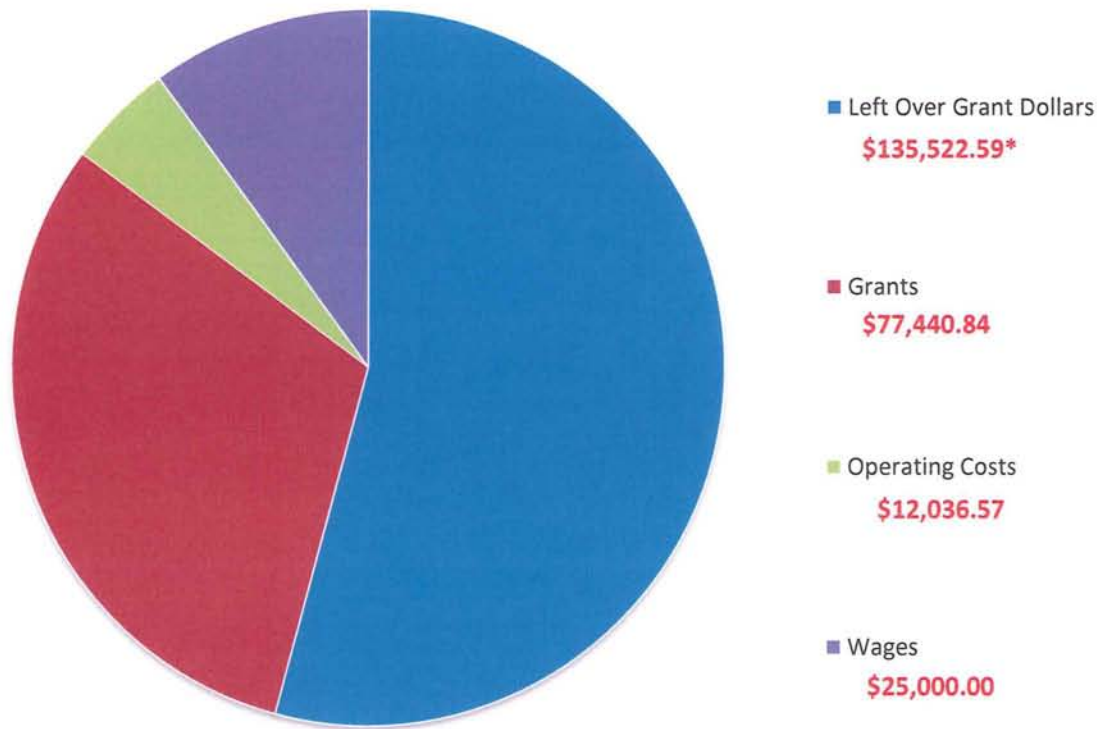




2009 Total Program Expenditures

In addition to the Grants awarded in 2009 the Division had program expenses involved in supporting the Trail Ambassador Program. This included program development, training, printing, meals, safety equipment, program forms and Advisory Council meetings. Below is a breakdown of actual 2009 costs for the second year of the Trail Ambassador Program.

This Chart is based on the full program funding of \$250,000.00.

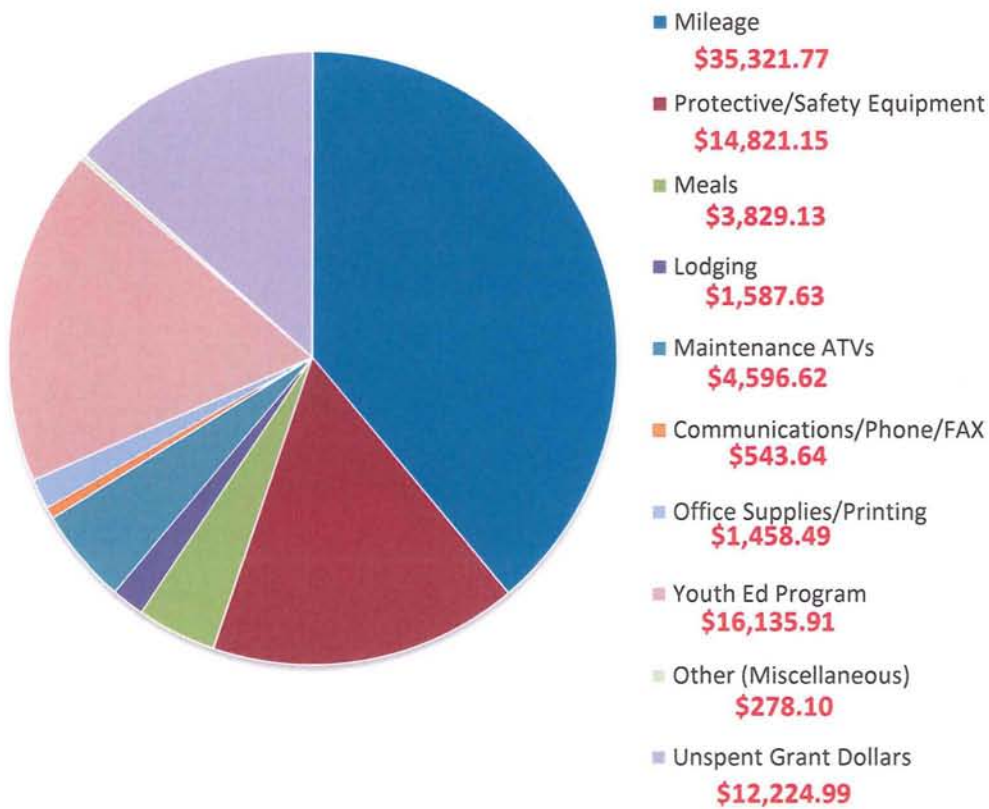


*At the end of the second year of the Program, \$135,522.59 was returned to the Off Highway Vehicle account.



2010 Trail Ambassador Grant Year Awards and Expenditures

The total amount of all Grants paid to 19 qualifying organizations in 2010 was \$90,797.43. In 2010, Grant Managers reported the following combined expenditures of \$78,572.44 in support of the Trail Ambassador Program. A carry-over of \$12,224.99 was shared by several sponsoring organizations for expenses outside of the monitoring season.

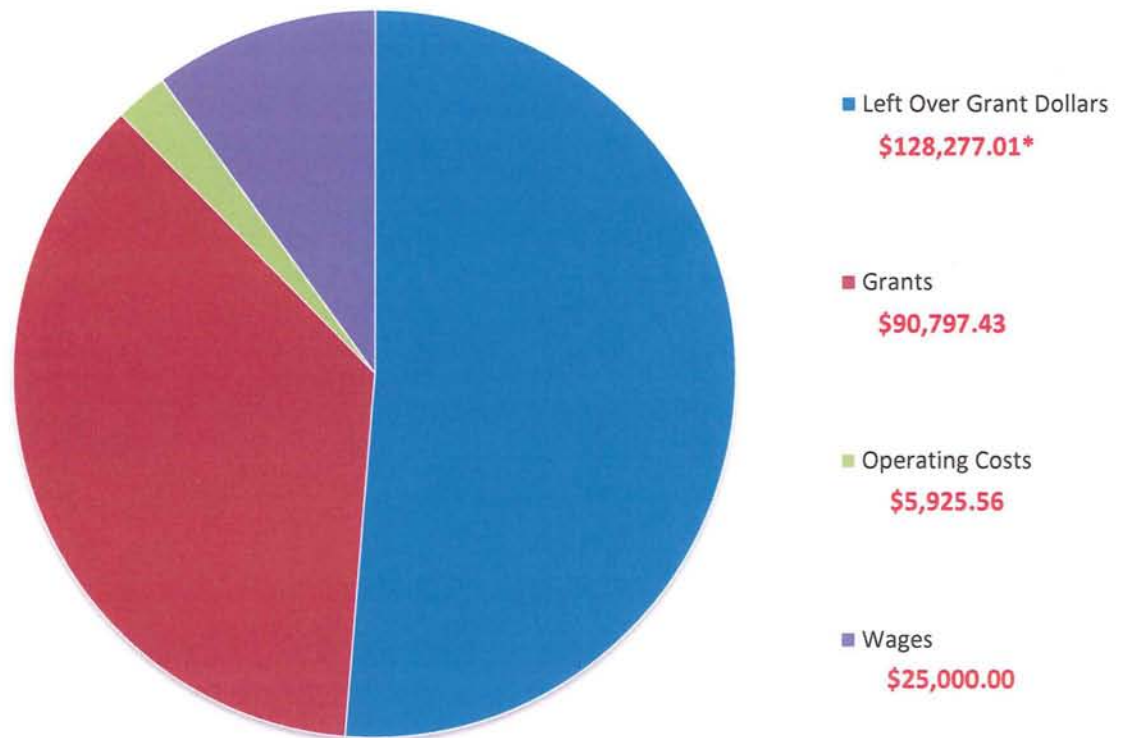




2010 Total Program Expenditures

In addition to the Grants awarded in 2010, the Division had program expenses involved in supporting the Trail Ambassador Program. This included program development, training, printing, meals, safety equipment and program forms. Below is a breakdown of actual 2010 cost for the third year of the Trail Ambassador Program.

This Chart is based on the full program funding of \$250,000.00.



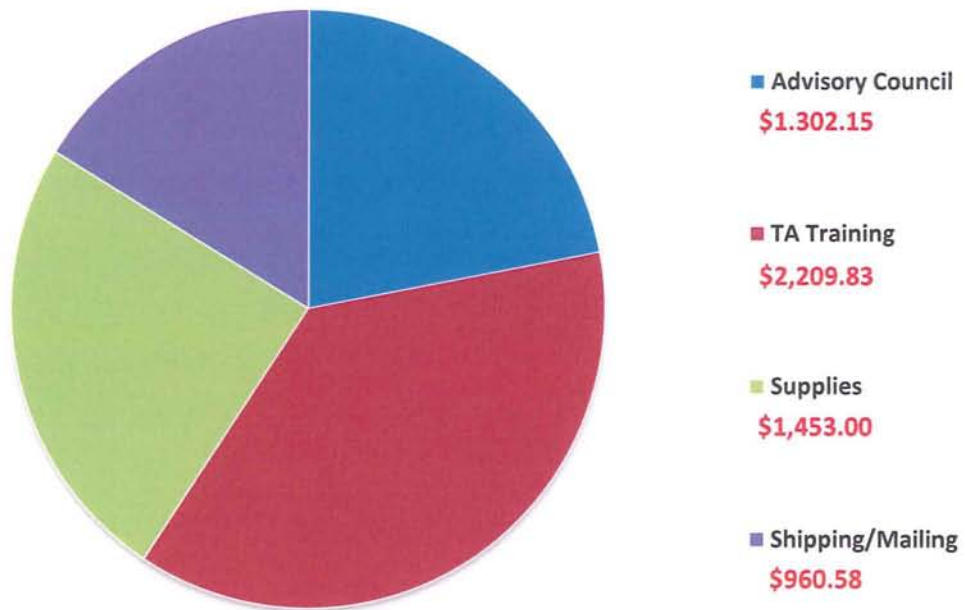
*At the end of the second year of the Program, \$128,277.01 was returned to the Off Highway Vehicle account.



2010 Division Program Expenses

The following chart depicts the specific Division of Enforcement expenses directly related to Trail Ambassador program support functions for 2010.

This chart is based on the 2010 Division of Enforcement program-related Expenses of \$5,925.56





The following outcomes were compiled from Trail Logs submitted in 2008 by Ambassadors:

- Trail Systems Monitored – 25
- Trail Monitoring Hours – 2,039
- Trail Monitoring Miles – 5, 901
- Class I-II ATVs Observed – 3,813
- Informational Handouts – 592
- Verbal Contacts Made – 1,270
- ORVs Observed – 42
- OHMs Observed – 396
- <18 No Helmet – 94
- Youth Passenger No Helmet – 33
- Extreme Unsafe Riding - 22
- Hazards:
 - Trees – 51
 - Washouts – 26
 - Other – 14
- Trail Signs:
 - Damaged – 62
 - Missing – 25
 - Recommended New Signs – 60
- Trail Change Braid/Bypass – 20
- Off Trail Travel – 41
- Off Trail Wetland – 33
- Invasive Species - 13

Off Trail Travel Observations

- ATV Tracks on Ski Trail
- Down to St. Croix River
- Hill Climbing Trail
- Logging Road
- Making Trail Off Both Sides
- New Path
- New Trail
- No Motorized Vehicles
- Not a Marked Trail
- Off Trail
- Off Trail Tracks into Water
- Recent Heavy ATV Travel
- Riding along Creek
- Ruts in Wetland
- Snowmobile only Trail
- Trail Blocked
- New Trail by Riders
- Trail Not Marked
- Unauthorized Trail
- Unmarked Trail
- Up Bank Travel
- Wetland Torn Up

Off Trail Travel/Wetlands Observations

- Cattails Trampled at Intersection
- Mudding Off Road
- Ruts in Wetland
- Off Trail into Wetland

Invasive Species Reported

- Amur Silver Grass
- Tansy
- Bull Thistle
- Leafy Spurge
- Oxeye Daisy
- Orange Hawkweed
- Birdsfoot Trefoil
- Siberian Pea Shrub



The following outcomes were compiled from Trail Logs submitted in 2009 by Ambassadors:

- Trail Systems Monitored – 29
- Trail Monitoring Hours – 4,173
- Trail Monitoring Miles – 10,709
- Class I-II ATVs Observed – 6,868
- Informational Handouts – 1,094
- Verbal Contacts Made – 2,295
- ORVs Observed – 81
- OHMs Observed – 534
- <18 No Helmet – 93
- Youth Passenger No Helmet – 29
- Extreme Unsafe Riding - 21
- Hazards:
 - Trees – 56
 - Washouts – 48
 - Other – 12
- Trail Signs:
 - Damaged – 21
 - Missing – 22
 - Recommended New Signs – 21
- Trail Change Braid/Bypass – 30
- Off Trail Travel – 48
- Off Trail Wetland – 22
- Invasive Species - 12

Off Trail Travel Observations

- Along Tracks
- ATV Traveling Snow Trail
- Blocked Area
- Bypass Culvert Wetland
- Drove around Fences
- Erosion
- Highline Travel
- Hunting Trail
- In Wet Ditch Area
- Looks like New Trail
- Marked Trail Not Used
- Off Steep Bank into Swamp
- Parking with Ruts
- Play Area
- Riding up Bank
- Travel through Missing Fence
- Under Power Line
- Trespass

Off Trail Travel/Wetlands Observations

- Across Stream
- Grassy Marsh/Ditch
- New Trail in Swamp
- Riding in Cattails

Invasive Species Reported

- Birdsfoot Trefoil
- Buckhorn
- Bull Thistle
- Common Tansy
- Orange Hawkweed
- Oxeye Daisy
- Perennial Sow Thistle
- Spotted Knapweed
- Wild Parsnip



The following outcomes were compiled from Trail Logs submitted in 2010 by Volunteer Trail Ambassadors:

- Trail Systems Monitored – 34
- Trail Monitoring Hours – 5,134
- Trail Monitoring Miles – 13,221
- Class I-II ATVs Observed – 7,994
- Informational Handouts – 745
- Verbal Contacts Made – 4,926
- ORVs Observed – 52
- OHMs Observed – 489
- <18 No Helmet – 116
- Youth Passenger No Helmet – 50
- Extreme Unsafe Riding - 11
- Hazards:
 - Trees – 125
 - Washouts – 80
 - Other – 34
- Trail Signs:
 - Damaged – 22
 - Missing – 20
 - Recommended New Signs – 23
- Trail Change Braid/Bypass – 31
- Off Trail Travel – 27
- Off Trail Wetland – 17
- Invasive Species - 12

Off Trail Travel Observations

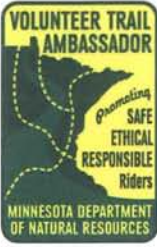
- Around Water
- At Power Line Crossing
- Driving on Old Trails
- Drove on Power Line
- Hill Climbing – Pipe Line
- Low Area Widening
- Marked but Going Around
- Mud Hole Created
- Off Trail Riding Blocked Off
- OHM Single Track
- Path around Tree
- Path Down to River
- Snowmobile Trail
- Using Trail through Clearing
- Running Down Trees
- Widening of Trail

Off Trail Travel/Wetlands Observations

- Making Path through Water
- Trail Down Slope into Pond
- Beside Sink Hole
- Driving into Lake

Invasive Species Reported

- Bull Thistle
- Canada Thistle
- Orange Hawkweed
- Oxeye Daisy
- Queen Anne’s Lace
- Sow Thistle
- Tansy
- White Clover



MULTI-YEAR (2008-2010) MONITORING TOTALS

➤ Trail Monitoring Hours	11,366
➤ Trail Monitoring Miles	29,796
➤ Public Verbal Contacts	8,477
➤ Informational Handouts	2,421
➤ Class I ATV	17,756
➤ Class 2 ATV	902
➤ ORV	176
➤ OHM	1,403

Divisional Program Outcomes

Comments from Divisional and Department Personnel on Program Outcomes

- The trail monitoring logs have assisted the Department with more efficient site specific work planning and rapid response to reported trail safety, signing and maintenance issues.
- The communication between all divisional staff, volunteer trail staff and the Trail Ambassadors has benefitted the program and the Department.
- Improved and expedited communications between all divisional staff, volunteer trail staff trails maintained through the grant-in-aid program as well as to forest trails under the responsibility of Trails and Waterways.
- The Department uses the TA logs as part of our monitoring of state forest off-highway vehicle use. Recreational use, including OHV, is also audited during the Forest Certification Process. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has been awarded the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) third-party certification on 4.84 million acres of state-administered forestlands. In 2005 the first certification audit expressed several OHV-related forest management concerns. In the 2010 audit these concerns were not expressed.
- The trail ambassadors have helped both Forestry and Parks and Trails Divisions immensely by identifying and reporting issues on our road and trail systems. This allows division staff to quickly find the resource issue and make the repair (washouts, fallen trees, flooding.)
- Use of GPS technology and cameras by Ambassadors provided quick and accurate information to department personnel.
- The Parks and Trails Division communicates Ambassador generated data relating to trail issues to the grant-in-aid trail administrators and/or sponsors to enable the trail maintenance volunteers to correct any reported issues.
- Coordination and communication between the DNR and volunteers is a mutually beneficial activity. The DNR understands the trail users needs and the Ambassadors better understand our Department.
- Monitoring efforts allowed enforcement activities to concentrate on identified trails or wetlands.

- Program resulted in an increase in volunteer Youth ATV Safety Training Program instructors and courses offered statewide.
- The Trail Ambassador Program has greatly assisted the department in averting and reducing negative trail and wetland impacts.
- Reports of wetlands incursions can be evaluated quickly and measures taken to prevent further damage.
- The program has greatly increased the number of educational contacts with OHV trail users.
- Compliance with OHV rules, regulations and safety on OHV trails has increased due to the level of visibility, presence and public contacts made by Volunteer Ambassadors.
- Monitoring efforts and the data collected now provides a baseline for many of the trail systems use and user types.
- The level of participation by volunteers and qualifying organizations meets the demands of the grant program.
- Educational efforts provided at local community events provides for broader non-user information sharing.



Summary

The Off-Highway Vehicle Safety and Conservation Program Grant Program (Trail Ambassador Program) has met the Statutory reporting requirement of the Commissioner.

The Trail Ambassador Grant Program is a model program and a success story. The effect of offering grants to provide trail monitoring and educational contacts with real time trail users has provided many benefits to users, department managers, sponsoring clubs, state organizations, OHV environmental and safety educational programs. User group driven grant programs like the Trail Ambassador Program are successful in providing OHV users with quality information and education opportunities to understand the benefits of responsible OHV use on public lands, trails and wetlands. The data gathered through this monitoring program has brought real time trail conditions to Department Managers who can then make decisions to handle the situation efficiently. When you look at the amount of hours, miles monitored and user contacts made possible by this program and compare the cost of other options, the cost benefit is substantial. This program provides valuable information that can be used by the Department to efficiently and effectively manage forest and trail resource for the benefit of all.

