

[October 18, 2006]

[Chairman] Roger [Breske]:

I know you were interested in the updates on the progress we are making in Vilas, Oneida, and Iron County on the ATV trail proposal in the Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest. Thought I'd shoot these notes to you as an FYI.

Also, I have not heard back from any lawmakers as to the need or want to meet to clarify what others at the first meeting stated regarding questions raised?

It is sometimes frustrating for me that I often get labeled as being against the ATV access legislation which is not true. When I last checked with Jeff Mersau's office last session to get clarification as to the new proposed language and to find out if it would usurp the current procedure for establishing routes, I was told it would. In other words, towns / municipalities would no longer use the current system for establishing route designations if they approved routes.....instead if any routes were approved all town roads within five miles of the trail would be mandated as open with no route signs.

I and the WATVA have no problem with that **if** the town wants it that way but many towns want **only** designated and signed routes. I was told the municipalities would have to accept the new way only. I don't know many towns that wouldn't be mad at lawmakers and the ATV community if they were forced to make that decision? While WATVA obviously is for more ATV access, we understand there are parameters and criteria and we understand towns and cities not wanting to be forced to take an "all or nothing" option? Anyway, this issue has a lot of issues wrapped around it and some folks don't see things from a statewide perspective, instead thinking only in their immediate community situation. In the end, all my memo was asking is for a way to "tweak" the proposed language so a municipality could have a choice in the method of route designations. I really look forward to further explaining the pros and cons of this with lawmakers and the committee.

Secondly related to the 13.10 request dollars to balance a shortfall in county law enforcement program needs, I'm not sure others not in state government understand how the ATV program budget is prepared based upon "projected" registration income by DNR. If they (DNR) project too many registrations in preparing their upcoming fiscal budget and the number is not achieved, there will be a shortfall of dollars to meet grant obligations. Therefore they wisely project conservatively. When the fiscal year is over and the balancing happens, there is often an "unobligated balance" that can't be spent without legislative authority.

I am familiar with this process because we have been faced with it before. Back in the early 2000's there was over \$800,000 in unobligated dollars that were earmarked to be sent to the general fund! We lobbied hard and were successful in getting then Governor Thompson to line item veto that out of the state budget, and then we went to the lawmakers to get authority to utilize the funds for ATV projects. In fact, that was the start of the Safety Enhancement grant program among many other improvements.

We couldn't keep it in an ATV "savings account" as you know, that's not how the state budget works and we were advised to come up with good ATV programs and projects or it'd be spent in the general fund. Thereafter we learned how the budget process works and we know the county law enforcement program needs last year was badly short funded, therefore the probability of county rec officers continuing is in jeopardy. We don't expect law officers on every corner or trail but in order for our Trail Ambassador Program to work and our trails to remain open, our trail patrol program was designed to have some law enforcement available to take what the peer pressure approach cannot.

Hopefully this kind of info helps us all understand better?

Also, I have attached a document from the US Forest Service from back in 2003 that does a pretty good job of explaining how the Ride Smart Trail Patrol program works. Also remember the patrol Frank and his crew use is not the Ride Smart program, it has no oversight and no criteria with recourse or backgrounds and training with law enforcement. Our program through Ride Smart does!

Thanks for listening.

Randy

[President, WI ATV Association]