

STATE TRAILS POLICY COMMITTEE HEARING - Friday, Nov. 10, 2006 in Merrill

At the first session of these meetings, I spoke of our concern for the lack of representation of family type riders on northern Wisconsin trails. We noted the members didn't seem to cover a wide enough spectrum, particularly with reference to ATV clubs with experience in developing and building trails, and those involved in Trail Patrols and club maintenance, etc.

Apparently the approach was taken to bring in people from various areas to testify and provide information and opinions, etc. rather than necessarily be on the committee itself. As our ATV Alliance looked at the makeup of the committee and heard the testimony, we were surprised at the lack of representation from our **County Forest Administrators**. In our part of the state, any proposals for trails or changes in them, or for routes, etc. must be handled through our Forest Administrators if County Forest Land is involved. Would it not seem logical to have someone in this role serving on the committee or at least invited to offer background information on procedures and fund management, etc.? Many of the questions raised would seem to fall in their area of expertise. Have you considered having them be a part of this?

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A second item of concern one of our members spoke to at the last meeting concerned **enacting legislation that would provide municipalities with the opportunity to open roads for access for their residents to reach nearby routes and trails**. (We read with interest the letter Randy Harden sent to Senator Breske regarding which people and groups he felt should be key players the committee should recognize, as well as suggested ATV topics, subjects and issues he said the Wisconsin ATV Association feels will need legislative initiatives and legislation to address. Whenever I hear that kind of phrase as to what our association feels is needed, I have to wonder where the ideas come from and who the "we" is, since our clubs don't seem to be consulted by Randy's officers or family before these sweeping statements come out. We have often discussed the fact that what people refer to as the state association really has no official state status that we are aware of. WATVA is an association of ATV clubs from throughout Wisconsin which publishes a magazine several times a year, whose number of members is often exaggerated in articles in various publications. NOHVIS, the National Off Highway Vehicle Insurance Services, is apparently the "business" end of the Harden family which currently holds the contract for safety education and trail patrol training in Wisconsin. It would seem to be a conflict of interest that the same group that promotes so many Challenges, Races, Mud events, etc. (which seem contrary to the family riding image that much of the northwoods ATV groups embrace) is the company or agency that sells the insurance for those events. It puts the DNR right in the middle of some big business, and you can perhaps begin to understand our concern for the seemingly endless chain of resistance and obstacles many of us have encountered as we try to plan for increased riding opportunities in our counties. All of that is perhaps another issue to be addressed when you feel the timing is appropriate.

For now, on the issue of access, the reason I brought up that letter, is that in it Randy spoke out, supposedly for all of us, against giving local access, and it greatly puzzled us. He stated that past introductions of an ATV access law didn't provide a municipality any option to limit their routes, that it was all or nothing. I had not heard that expressed before, so I contacted Senator Breske's office and asked for help in seeing what the most recent access bill attempt included. Beth quickly responded with the document and proposed amendments and we have studied it. Neither my husband nor I could find anything that seemed to indicate a lack of choice for the municipalities.....the word "may" was used many times, so I don't understand why an organization that supposedly represents us would speak out against things many of us are fighting for. He even went so far as to say that "we had many panicked clubs and towns that told us they'd be forced to take all routes out if they couldn't pick and 'chose' – I think he meant 'choose' - specific routes. The proposed document we studied sounded like it allowed for just that, for municipalities to be able to have choices in whether or not they opened roads for access! We would encourage you to look into this and support passage of this needed legislative opportunity for towns and their ATVer's, which already exists for their Snowmobilers.

Thank you for your continued interest and work on these matters. It is especially encouraging to those of us in the trenches to hear the excellent questions some of you are asking, and then, to see the information quickly being provided for the committee. We don't see the DNR telling you to just sit back and be patient, that this is not something that can happen quickly. It can take months and even years and many requests to get answers that begin to pertain to the actual questions we ask, and we commend you and wish you success in the huge task you have undertaken. The proverbial can of worms seems to be opening.

Carol Horneck, Sec. of L.O.L. ATV Alliance,
representing Langlade, Oneida, and Lincoln County ATV Clubs