

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON STATE TRAILS POLICY
Senator Roger Breske, Chair
November 10, 2006 - Merrill, WI
Public Testimony

Good morning, my name is Diane Muri and I am a year-round resident of Vilas County. I was delighted to note that a goal of the SCORP Report is to "Promote Wisconsin outdoor recreation as a means to better health and wellness for state citizens." On page 2-16 of the report it is noted that 61% of adults and 24% of high school students in Wisconsin are overweight. Obesity is a risk factor for type II diabetes, cerebrovascular disease and heart disease. The cost to the state through Medicaid, Badger Care and other state programs for these conditions is astronomical. Promoting physical exercise is the primary way to eliminate this epidemic and reduce health care costs to the state. Riding bikes, hiking and cross country skiing on state trails provide an excellent option and motivation for people to get more exercise. The efforts that the state makes to create and maintain trails for these activities are commendable.

My concern today is factors that act to reduce the opportunities for physical activity on state trails. The SCORP report notes (page 2-17) that the number 5 personal barrier and the number 5 environmental barrier to increased physical activity are "conflicts with motorized uses" and "noise from ATVs and other motorized uses" respectively (barriers 1-4 relate to time, family etc.). With the policy guidance that this committee provides, the DNR can certainly act to eliminate the barriers cited above. Such action would help to improve the health of Wisconsinites and reduce state health care costs.

Of note is the increasing pressure that the state is getting to provide ATV trails on state lands. I can assure you that the people who enjoy silent physical sports, and we are the majority, do not want to share trails with ATVs nor do we want the noise pollution and environmental degradation that they bring. Know that we pay trail fees too! Over

3.5 million of us walk for pleasure, 2 million of us bike and 1.4 million day hike (SCORP Table 2-1, page 2-3) .

Close to my heart and adjoining our property, the Northern Highland American Legion forest in northern Wisconsin is a state treasure and it should be preserved in its present state for future generations. ATV trails are not compatible with its' fragile ecological environment. Unfortunately, the ATV culture is not friendly or even neutral to forest lands. I recently saw a TV ad in the Milwaukee area for ATVs that spoofed a man who was washing his ATV and pictured him and his ATV in pink – “macho is mud” was the message. Our wetlands are fragile and cannot tolerate the devastation that ATVs can cause. Our soil/sand is easily damaged and slow to recover. We should not take the risk of building more trails. Three hundred fifty miles of trails already on state land and an \$8 million budget for ATV riders in the state is more than sufficient. {Note: I strongly support the safety education allocations in the budget because of the drinking and driving and lack of helmet use among ATV riders}. For these reasons, I am strongly opposed to more ATV trails in the state, or we will have a “tragedy of the commons” that future generations will never forgive us for.

Thank you for listening and I urge all of you to dig in your heels and preserve the public lands that make Wisconsin so special.

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