

Senator Roger Breske, Chairperson
and
Beth Piliouras
and
Special Legislative Committee on State Trails Policy

October 31, 2006

Dear Committee Chair and Members:

I write to you with several concerns as you establish new and revised policies regarding recreational land use in Wisconsin specific to state trails. My concerns stated in this letter stem from various roles that I hold: as citizen, outdoor recreational enthusiast, tourism & recreational business owner, and chair of the "Green Alliance" a special committee of the Chippewa County Tourism Council.

Here are my concerns:

The SCORP document and what it states...

In the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources "2005-2010 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan" (SCORP)

it is indicated that 54% of recreationalists state that noise from ATV's and other motorized users was high ranking as a "barrier" to enjoying recreation in Wisconsin. In my mind, this data indicates there are probably more 'silent sports' enthusiasts in this state than those who utilize ATV's. While I do not look at land use issues as a *competition*, I do believe that state funds should be used in a *balanced manner* for diverse types of recreational uses. Additionally, protection of the environment must *always* be a top priority.

The 'Sound Environment'...

One of the motivating factors for me writing this letter is to underscore a primary reason why people choose to recreate outdoors in

nature...and that is the pristine '*sound environment*'. I describe this as the rich, diverse sensory experience of the sounds of wildlife...or sometimes utter silence. Listening to the loon call on a lake or Sandhill Cranes make their prehistoric sounds as they fly overhead. We are bombarded daily in towns, cities, along roadways by the noises of machines, motors and more. Humans desire to be in nature because of the rich multi-sensory experiences that it offers, but that sound environment is being destroyed by the increasing number of recreational motors that we hear each time we visit a once pristine natural area. Do we want this 'sound environment' destroyed or diminished further?

Use of motorized recreational vehicles & their impact on our tourism businesses...

While operating my business, MI ZI ZAK KAYAKS, I receive 'complaints' or frustrations by an increasing number of customers as they seek solitude on no-wake lakes, rivers and especially campgrounds or parks with minimal motors or generators running. In fact, I totally avoid certain lakes for the safety and comfort of my customers because motor boats and near shore trail traffic are sometimes very loud and dangerous. Quiet or rustic parks and campsites seem to be disappearing in many popular recreation regions, giving way to those who own large RV motor homes, ATV's and motor rec-toys.

There seems to be a dominant attitude that silent sports recreationalists 'just don't matter' in decision-making processes. Instead, we seem to be considered 'minor players' where tourism business is concerned. Again, the SCORP study certainly indicates something other than that. As a business owner, I would like our customers needs considered, as well.

Tourism customers travel from diverse regions to visit this area of northern Wisconsin. Some enjoy and use motorized vehicles responsibly, however there seems to be a prevailing attitude that the 54% of recreationalists can be displaced while sharing space. At township meetings where water and land use issues are being

decided, angry voices parallel noisy motors, "We have RIGHTS!". I rarely hear such comments or aggressive demeanor from silent sports enthusiasts. Additionally, nature seldom has such a vocal advocate. Continually, I observe that the 'squeaky wheel gets heard' and gets what it wants. I would like to see the voices of hikers, bicyclists, cross country skiers, snowshoers, paddlers and others heard in an egalitarian manner. Please consider fair distribution of funding and land use among all users. Keep land stewardship and conservation as priorities.

Wisconsin's pristine environment is why we choose to recreate here.

As a business owner, noise and motors detracts from our business. Increasing the ATV trails and promoting greater use of motorized recreational vehicles costs us business and tax dollars. Please consider this fact, in regions where many engage in silent sports...which is all across Wisconsin.

Funding for ATV's, but limited funds for other recreational uses...

I was quite shocked at a recent northern Wisconsin community gathering when I heard an ATV club organizer state how much grant money they had received and are hoping to receive in the future! With true democracy, funding is best spent in an egalitarian manner, not simply serving one special interest group. It is disappointing to see this type of trend. Again, I support fair distribution of funds for state trails.

Travel Green Wisconsin...

In January of 2007, Wisconsin will launch the new program, "Travel Green Wisconsin" which is beginning to receive both national and international attention. In 2006, four pilot counties promoted green, sustainable business practices in recreational and tourism businesses and organizations.

To me, it only makes sense to consider what this innovative program means and to take steps in alignment with it, versus promoting more motorized recreational trails. In the future, I can only imagine that it will be an embarrassment NOT to want to conserve resources, protect the environment and practice sustainability.

Drinking and use of motorized recreational vehicles...

My final note is a very personal one. Another of my concerns is that of the danger of alcohol consumption correlated with recreational motorized vehicle use (ATV's, power boats, jet skiis, snowmobiles). These dangerous practices continue to happen in the region where I recreate, run a business and live, in northern Wisconsin. They have for years. Nearly everyone knows this, but denial persists. This was all very much 'in my face' recently, as my neighbor and I were nearly hit by a drunk driver last week on a nearby scenic state highway. While the driver did not hit us, I needed to act as a 'first responder' to him, the injured and unconscious passenger. To my knowledge, he (and too many others) drink alcohol while driving their autos *AND* recreational vehicles. Perhaps this point could be brought up in your ATV discussion forums, as well. I have never felt threatened by a drunk recreational kayaker or hiker on the trail yet.

I thank you for taking time to listen to my concerns and for the important work you are doing.

Sincerely,

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