

Testimony of Jerry Woolpy, Minocqua Resident to the Wisconsin State Trails Policy Committee, Merrill City Council Chambers 1004 East First Street, Merrill Wisconsin, 1-10 AM, November 10, 2006.

Regarding ATV Trails in the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest

Senator Breske, Members of the State Trail Policy Committee, and Fellow Citizens, I have read with interest the correspondence of this committee posted on the web (at http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/3_COMMITTEES/Special%20Committees/2006/TRAIL/index.htm)

Over the past two years I have attended and spoken at meetings on the plan for the forest. I have attended and spoken at meetings of the DNR advisors. I have attended and spoken at meetings of various county boards and townships. I have written letters to you, to the directors of the forests, to editors, and to the governor, as many of the people here today have done. And, in response to your recent press release, I am frustrated, alarmed, angry, and bewildered.

This is because the weight of the evidence, like the weight of the correspondence, like the weight of the numbers of interested parties points overwhelming to the conclusion that ATVs do not belong in the Northern Highland Forest. They are not wanted. They are not needed. They are not compatible with current recreational uses, with forestry, and with the conservation of these lands.

Why then does this keep coming up? Is it the money that government receives from ATV interests? Is it the mistaken notion that ATVs are good for the Northwoods economy? Is the utter disregard for the vast majority of people living in the Northwoods? Why won't you put this matter to rest and let us go back to hunting, fishing, kayaking, birding, hiking, biking, in peace and quiet like we came here to do?

How many times must we provide the following evidence: That one to five percent of ATVs do not stay on designated trails no matter what training and enforcement they provide. That ATVs erode the land, seed invasives, and destroy habitats. That there is not one place in Wisconsin, North America, Central America, South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, or Australia where recreational ATVs have not reeked havoc on the land.

Granted a small, funded, and vocal minority seeks access to these revered resources for their amusement. And granted many of the seekers are fine citizens who do not intend harm. But not granted that they can keep their fellows in check or leave the land as they found it. They cannot because the motorized beasts that they champion are designed, advertised, and tested to thrill the riders by dashing through the wilderness at a killing pace, over hill and dale, in mud, in sand, in water.

Thank you. Jerry Woolpy/POB 483/ Minocqua WI 54548 jerryw@earlham.ed