

[December 7, 2006]

Dear Special Committee on State Trails Policy,

The citizens of Fond du Lac spoke out last night at the Fond du Lac County Parks and Planning Committee meeting. The committee was presented with a petition to allow year round ATV access on state trails in Fond du Lac County. There was a huge community presence at this meeting opposing this petition. It was voted down 5-0. I believe the opposition to ATV use on our trails is not unique to Fond du Lac County.

I am writing to address the issue of ATV use of state trails throughout Wisconsin. I am a daily user of the Mascoutin and Northwestern trails.

The availability of these trails has increased my quality of life tremendously. There are very few opportunities to "get away from it all" and these trails offer this. No cars, no crowds, no traffic except for the few roads that they cross. They pass quiet marshes, prairies, and woods teeming with wildlife. The Mascoutin Trail passes through a quiet marsh in Winnebago County that is part of a wetland restoration project.

Great White Egrets, Sandhill Crane, Green Herons, Great Herons and a multitude of waterfowl are now using this area for breeding and nesting.

These trails also create healthy recreational opportunities by providing people of all ages with attractive, safe, accessible and low- or no-cost places to cycle, walk, hike, or jog. There are few places to go to enjoy the kind of environment that the trails offer. As a nurse, I can not emphasize enough the positive impact of outdoor physical recreation on the health of our citizens and communities.

If the trails are opened to ATVs year-round those that frequent the trails for healthy recreation will not be able to use the trails safely.

These vehicles travel at speeds up to 60mph. These trails are narrow and were not designed for large vehicle use. A dog or a child or someone on a bicycle would have little chance if hit.

The issue of maintenance and destruction of the trail is another issue that I have taken into consideration. These trails were not made for all-terrain vehicle use. ATVs would certainly damage these groomed trails to the point that it would be unsafe or impossible for bikers, joggers or others to use.

I am adamantly opposed to motorized vehicle access to our state trails with the exception of snowmobiles as currently used. I encourage the committee to deny access to ATVs on Wisconsin state trails.

Sincerely,
Mary Fleming
Ripon, WI
mjfleming@charter.net