



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #571

Northern State Forest ATV Trails (DNR -- Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation)

Bill Agency

[LFB 2007-09 Budget Summary: Page 414, #17]

CURRENT LAW

The DNR administers a state recreational program for all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). There are approximately 120 miles of designated trails for ATV use on northern state forest properties.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$104,100 in 2007-08 (\$24,100 in one-time funding) and \$80,000 in 2008-09 from the ATV account of the conservation fund for a sustainable ATV system in northern state forests.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Funding under the bill was identified in the DNR operations and maintenance appropriation to assess the suitability of existing trails, evaluate locations for new trails to minimize potential ecological damage; to improve trail maintenance; and for increased information and educational activities.

2. While the bill would provide the funds for DNR ATV trails operations and maintenance, the administration indicates that the funds should be provided for DNR LTEs primarily for ATV trail enforcement activities, rather than trail maintenance. The Department argues that increased enforcement is necessary to address concerns about crowding on trails, erosion and soil damage, potential introduction of invasive species, and motor noise in the Black River and Flambeau River State Forests. In order to conduct trail enforcement activities, the LTEs would be required to be credentialed law enforcement officers. Funding of \$70,000 would be provided for

salary, fringe benefits, and supplies for two or three seasonal ranger LTEs (at least one each at Brule River and Flambeau River State Forests). While the LTEs would have a law enforcement focus, they would also conduct some of the activities originally indicated by the administration; they would evaluate ATV trail design and maintenance, and ensure that potential ecological damage adjacent to the trails is minimized.

3. Additionally, \$10,000 annually would be provided for educational materials to promote sustainable ATV use and limit environmental damage. Further, the bill would provide one-time funding of \$24,100 in 2007-08 for the purchase of two all-terrain vehicles and related equipment for use by the LTE rangers.

4. If no funding is provided, the Department indicates that the additional enforcement and safety education work would not be performed. However, the Department would continue to work with local ATV groups on educational efforts and would attempt to recruit volunteers to conduct some of the trail maintenance activities.

ALTERNATIVES TO BILL

1. Adopt the provision in the bill to provide \$104,100 in 2007-08 and \$80,000 in 2008-09 from the ATV account for ATV trail operations and maintenance in the northern state forests.

ALT 1	Change to Bill Funding	Change to Base Funding
SEG	\$0	\$184,100

2. Provide \$104,100 in 2007-08 and \$80,000 in 2008-09 for DNR LTEs to perform ATV enforcement and safety education activities in northern state forests.

ALT 2	Change to Bill Funding	Change to Base Funding
SEG	\$0	\$184,100

3. Delete provision.

ALT 3	Change to Bill Funding	Change to Base Funding
SEG	-\$184,100	\$0

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