

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

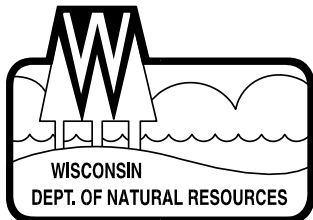
Lightweight Utility Vehicle Pilot

Program Results

2007-2009



Photo Courtesy of Wisconsin DNR



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2007-2009 Lightweight Utility Vehicle Pilot Program Report Summary Recreation Enforcement and Education Section

The Lightweight Utility Vehicle Pilot (LUV) Program was created in 2007 Wisconsin Act 20.

In summary, the program allowed the operation of LUVs on designated ATV trails and routes within certain counties. Florence, Lincoln, Marinette, Sawyer and Washburn counties elected to participate and Forest, Langlade and Oneida did not. No formal registration of LUVs was required, however operators were asked to complete a free registration form and submit it to the Department of Natural Resources. Marinette County implemented a \$20 trail sticker for LUVs which was good for the entire length of the program.

User Participation

During 2008, 382 LUV users completed registration forms and during 2009, 362 LUV users completed registration forms. The largest age group represented (40%) consisted of users between the ages of 36 – 50 followed closely by users between the ages of 51 – 65 (36%). The vast majority of the users were Wisconsin residents with slightly over 100 users coming from the neighboring states of Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota. The users were fairly, equally dispersed amongst the counties participating in the program. Marinette and Florence counties saw the highest amount of participation, most likely due to those counties adjoining with Michigan trails where LUV use is already permitted. Many users indicated they were planning on riding in each of the participating counties.

User Input

As anticipated, positive comments about the pilot program were received from participants. The majority of the positive comments related to the users being older and/or disabled and liked the ease of the side by side seating of LUVs. It was explained that many older/disabled users had difficulty getting their leg over the seat of a traditional ATV which has a straddled type of seat. Some users commented that it was “discrimination” to not allow LUVs due to the fact that they couldn’t mount and operate an ATV. Two users that stated they were disabled specifically stated they wanted to expand the roadway use of LUVs because they couldn’t operate a licensed motor vehicle or it was just easier to operate an LUV.

Others stated that it was beneficial to be able to carry a passenger next to them so they could hold a conversation, didn’t have to have people following behind in the dust or could carry a passenger that doesn’t drive or otherwise couldn’t enjoy an ATV trail. Another benefit indicated was that a couple could trade their two ATVs for just on LUV. Many users commented that LUVs were safer than ATVs due to their roll bars, seat belts and/or doors. LUVs were also thought to be safer due to the fact that LUVs were operated at slower speeds than ATVs and by older people. Users also stated that trail damage from LUVs would be less for the same reasons.

Several other citizens contacted the DNR complaining that the specifications for an LUV as defined for the program did not allow them to use their particular vehicle. These vehicles were either too wide, heavy or did not meet other specifications listed. These vehicles were often large LUV type vehicles, mini-trucks, go carts, golf carts or dune buggies.

Local Government Input

Surveys were sent out to various local, county, state and federal agencies within the counties participating in the LUV Pilot Program. The surveys were returned by the following personnel: sheriff’s deputies, conservation wardens, U.S. Forest Service Law Enforcement Officers, County Forest Administrators, County Forest Business Managers, County Board Supervisors, Park Rangers, Tourism Directors and State Trail Managers. The following are the questions on the survey and a summary of the responses received:

Describe the overall amount of LUV trail use and impact you observed?

Use varied from minimal to high. Little to no impacts reported.

Describe the overall amount of LUV road use and impact you observed?

Use varied from none to high. Little to no impacts reported.

2007-2009 Lightweight Utility Vehicle Pilot Program Report Summary (Continued)

Local Government Input (cont.)

Explain any safety concerns/issues?

The two areas of safety concerns mentioned were the width of LUVs on the trails and bridges and how it would affect passage of other LUVs and ATVs. The other concern was the future size of LUVs.

Explain any positive public contact/feedback you received?

Most respondents reported receiving positive feedback from LUV users. Most users were excited about being able to use their LUV on the trails and greatly enjoyed the experience. Several elderly and/or disabled users like using LUVs due to the favorable seating arrangement. Users wanted the program to become permanent. Businesses were happy about the additional customers as a result of the pilot program.

Explain any negative positive public contact/feedback you received?

- The program isn't permanent.
- An incident took place where an ATV operator crashed off the trail to avoid an oncoming LUV. Investigation showed that the crash would have also occurred had the LUV been another ATV.
- LUVs being larger in size and their being less room to pass them on the trail.
- LUVs growing in size in the future and trails having to be modified further to accommodate them.
- Disabled people being prohibited from operating an LUV due to the requirement of a driver's license.
- Concerns of LUVs running on winter snowmobile trails.

List any suggestion you might have for a future LUV or similar program?

- Make the program permanent, registration program with trail funding.
- More education.
- Limit LUV weight, width, length and engine.
- Prevent LUV performance from being enhanced through modifications.
- Exclude strictly work-type LUVs.
- Allow disabled to operate LUVs.
- Consider LUVs as ATVs.
- Limit size and horsepower.
- Statewide registration and participation.

Other overall comments regarding the LUV Pilot Program?

- Good, viable program.
- Needs to be permanent.
- Concerned trails will turn into roads to accommodate these larger vehicles.
- Positive addition to the ATV program.
- Need to have a maximum size limit for LUVs and then have it enforced.
- A way to generate additional funding and tourism.
- Concerned about underage operation and operation on closed trails.
- Would like to see more counties involved.
- LUVs are a safer vehicle.
- These vehicles are the future.
- No problems.

2007-2009 Lightweight Utility Vehicle Pilot Program Report Summary (Continued)

Complaints/Incidents

A few general complaints were received about the size of LUVs and concerns about passing LUVs on or along the trail. One complaint was received from an ATV operator after he was reportedly run off the trail by an LUV and crashed on a corner. Investigation of that incident concluded that the crash would also have occurred had the LUV in question been an ATV. One fatality occurred on a vehicle that did not meet the counties narrower definition of an LUV. A six wheel amphibious vehicle was operating down an ATV Route while towing a trailer. A small child fell out of the trailer and was fatally injured while being run over by the trailer.

A disabled LUV operator contacted DNR and county personnel to complain about the Pilot Program requirement for LUV operators to have a driver's license. The subject stated that the driver's license requirement prevented him from driving his LUV on the public roads as he had done previously. It was found that this subject had been illegally operating his LUV on public roadways prior to the LUV Pilot Program even initiating.

One county that chose not to participate in the Pilot Program was concerned that there would be a considerable cost involved in modification of all of the gates along their current ATV trails. They currently have gates with openings that are just wide enough to allow passage of a single ATV. This gate system allows ATVs to pass yet prevent trucks from entering the trail.

Other Info.

The Wisconsin ATV Association (WATVA) membership voted in favor of including LUV/UTV owners/users within their organization. This is important for any success of a potential, future LUV/UTV registration program in Wisconsin. The DNR and WATVA have a good, working relationship which helped create a successful ATV Program in the state.

DNR Comments/Conclusion

The LUV Pilot Program proved very popular with LUV owners/operators. The program also received positive responses from the land/trail managers in many of the participating counties. Overall, there was little LUV use compared to ATV use as expected. The LUV Pilot Program was temporary; therefore many participants were people that already owned LUVs. A small number of people were reported to purchase a new LUV specifically to participate in the Pilot Program.

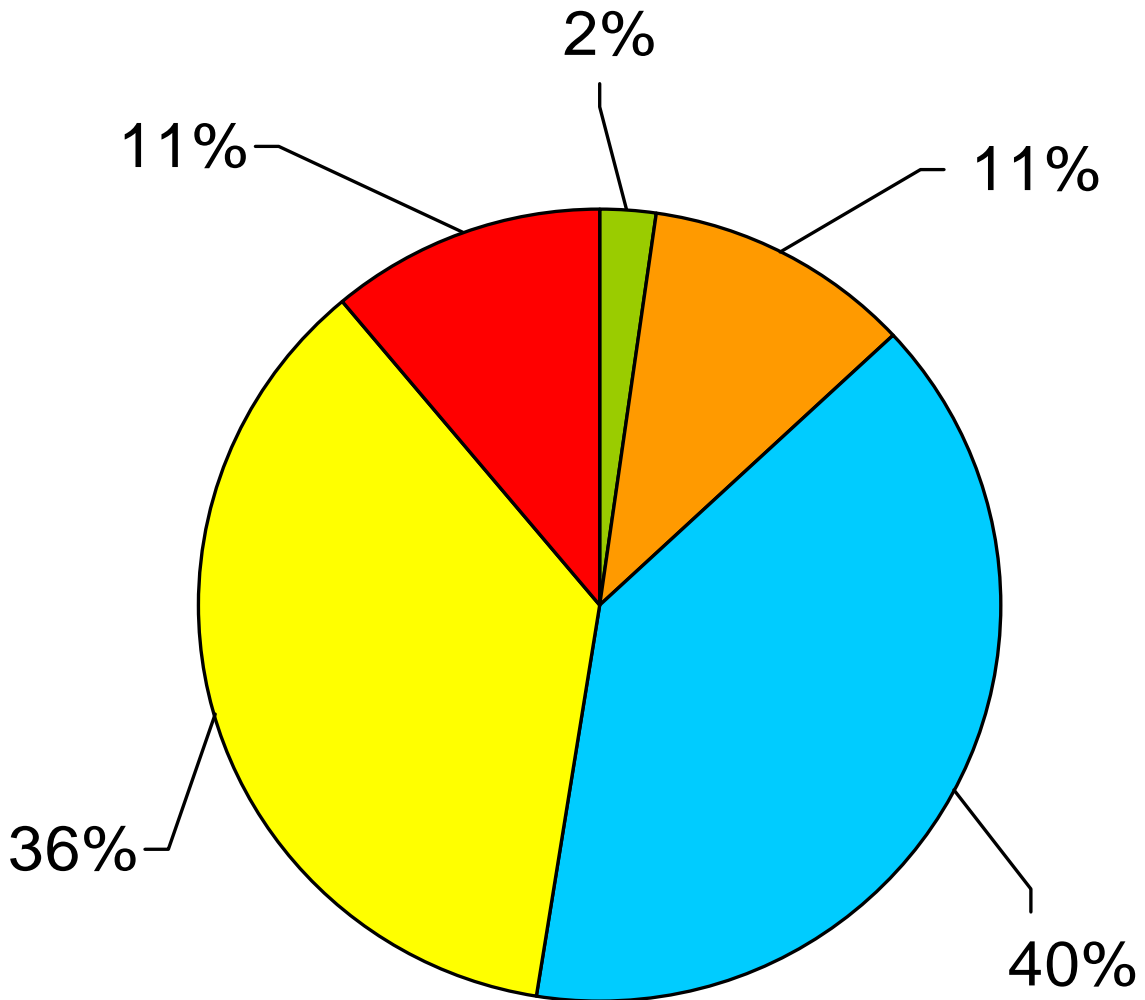
The size of LUVs in relation to the current ATV trails is an issue. Some land/trail managers may choose to widen some or all trails to accommodate the wider vehicles. Bridges will also be an issue as it will not be feasible to widen all of the bridges. A rule or law may need to be implemented requiring all LUVs to yield to smaller vehicles prior to crossing a bridge and to permit only one LUV to cross a bridge at a time.

In reviewing LUV use in other states, owners have made major modifications to their machines which greatly increase their width, weight, height, wheel base and overall size. If this program was to become permanent in the future, additional regulations which restrict such modifications would be needed.

Although data from the LUV Pilot Program was overall positive, the department would like to collect more data on an expanded level to help determine support for a future LUV/UTV program on a statewide level. A possible suggestion would be to extend the LUV Pilot Program for another two year period and expand participation statewide. A preliminary survey of counties with ATV trails indicated that 14 counties were willing to participate and six were not.

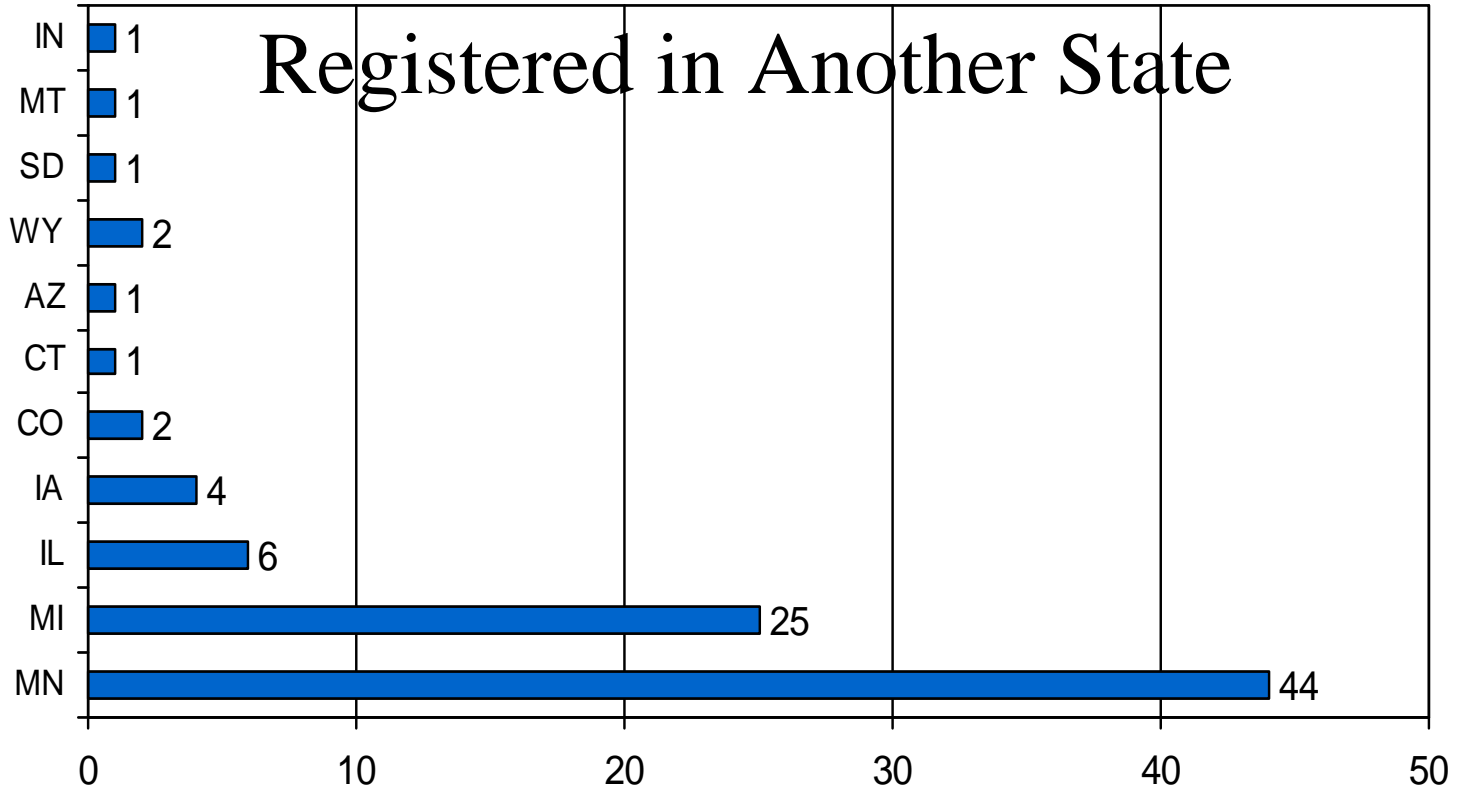
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Age Groups

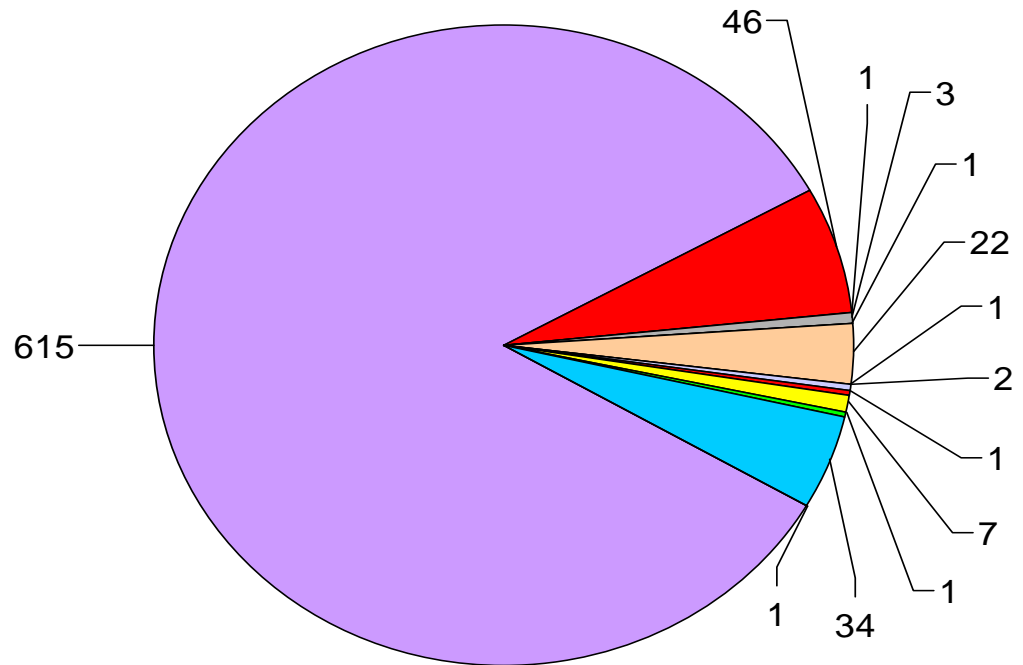
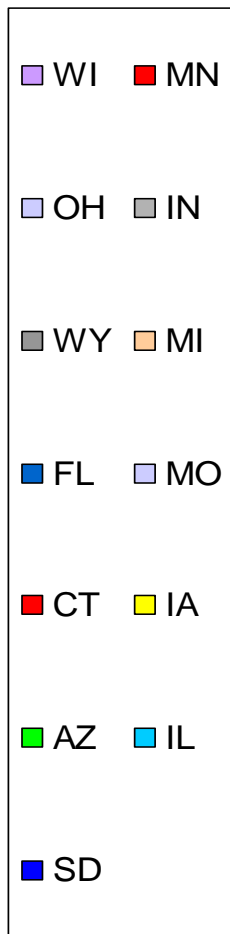


■ 16-25 ■ 26-35 ■ 36-50 ■ 51-65 ■ 66 and above

Registered in Another State



State of Residency



County of Operation

