

GOVERNOR'S OFF-ROAD VEHICLE COUNCIL  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Madison, WI

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Wisconsin ATV UTV Association  
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As it stands today, there's a significant problem trying to account for the number of winter ATV/UTV participants riding on snowmobile trails. Currently there is no method to track how many ATV/UTV riders engage in wintertime trail riding. Yet the ORVC is tasked to make wintertime funding decisions without a reliable system that determines winter ATV UTV trail use, compared to only summer. Without having this data available, the ORV Council is still charged with making winter trail funding decisions. This lack of information forces us to make important funding recommendations without knowing if we're underpaying or overpaying from the ATV UTV registration program account.

The ORV Council (ORVC) requests that the Wisconsin ATV UTV Association (WATVA) seek legislation to provide a winter ATV/UTV trail pass program. The purpose would be to generate specific funds that apply to winter only ATV/UTV shared use on snowmobile trails, thus providing a reliable mechanism to accurately determine actual winter use on these shared trails. Unlike the snowmobile program, the ATV & UTV registration program is challenged with two different riding seasons of grant requests. Sometimes these winter / summer trails are different, sometimes they are a combination summer and winter, and sometimes other variations apply that are unique to the specific riding area.

This change would ensure the proper level of funding is provided for the intended use and purpose. We envision the winter pass might be similar to the current snowmobile trail pass, but apply only toward winter trail systems. We do not envision this pass being required on frozen water surfaces or road routes. Our thoughts are that the current summer use registration program is performing satisfactorily, therefore we are not requesting any changes in that capacity.

The council also requests that WATVA explore a standard set of state-wide rules as to when ATV/UTVs may be operated on snowmobile trails during the winter. Local rules relating to when ATVs or UTVs may be operated on a winter only snowmobile trail have developed piecemeal over the years without much coordination between jurisdictions. This has led to inconsistency and confusion for riders crossing between different jurisdictions. If a statewide policy standard could be achieved, it would create consistency that is currently lacking. As we all know, the ATV UTV program has grown into a powerful tourism and economic driver that affects many businesses and industries across our state. As more people are now participating than ever before, it behooves us to explore different adjustments to account for this kind of expansion.

The ORVC is making this request to WATVA to explore and pursue these issues. As a council, we became aware of shortfalls in the system that led to these requests. Our statutory responsibility is to advise and make recommendations related to ATV/UTV trails, routes, activities, and funding. We are unable to do a proper job of managing ATV/UTV resources specific to winter only snowmobile trail use without the proposed action or some equivalent remedy. In this case, the council believes this matter should be referred to WATVA for further action.

The ATV/UTV program currently pays \$100 per mile for (XXXX) miles of snowmobile trails that allow winter only use of ATV/UTVs [*issue of UTV no reimb*]. This amounts to approximately (XXXXXXX) dollars being contributed from ATV/UTV registration funds each year. The purpose of these funds is to contribute to grooming and maintenance of the winter only trails.

In addition, the snowmobile program asks the ATV/UTV program to contribute to bridge replacements and repairs on winter only trails. In the past, ATV/UTV contributions have routinely been 50%. If said bridge(s) are on year-round trail systems, that's one thing. On the other hand, if a contribution request of 50% is for a winter only ATV UTV system, that would imply that half of the winter use of the bridge is by ATVs or UTVs. Without a winter only type registration, there is no way to make an accurate recommendation for trails or winter only bridges. Is every other vehicle on a snowmobile trail / bridge an ATV or UTV?

The best remedy is to institute a trail pass system that accounts for ATV/UTV winter use participation. This would then identify the actual funds generated for winter use that can be applied to the winter only ATV/UTV program. As it stands today, no one can accurately state whether the ATV/UTV program is underpaying or overpaying. Are there 10,000 winter riders or 100,000? Without a reliable method to track this data, no one really knows. Responsible management of program assets and fairness to both the snowmobile and the ATV/UTV programs requires that we solve this problem.

As it applies to exploring a more standard set of ATV / UTV use winter use parameters, the current situation is likely a deterrent to more winter use. If people have difficulty trying to sort out the varying ordinances and jurisdictions involved as to whether or when they can legally ride winter trails, they're probably being discouraged from riding in the first place.

The notion of a separate winter trail pass seems appealing. We already have heard of complaints and inquiries from snowmobilers about why ATVs and UTVs don't have to have a trail pass like snowmobiles do.

It is important that there be a separate fee associated with the winter ATV/UTV pass. Without one we'll never get an accurate picture of use. This is a firm measurement of the funds being generated for that use that we are unable to get as things stand today.

As a side note, accurately generating funds with a trail pass for ATV/UTV winter use is required. Snowmobilers and ATV/UTV riders have a looming problem related to the ever increasing size of grooming equipment exceeding the capacity of the engineered bridges on a system. Further, and

especially true with winter only snowmobile bridges, there are locally produced bridges that are not engineered and are of unknown capacity. We need to address this safety and mobility issue. Additional funds generated by an ATV/UTV winter trail pass would serve the program well with this significant need.

The trail pass eliminates the issue of underpaying or overpaying for indeterminate use and gives resource managers the tools they need to act in the best interests of the program.

The current system for sharing costs on year around trails is not affected by the winter trail pass. Year around trails have to do with paths and bridges that are open to ATVs and UTVs during both summer and winter.

Thank you for considering this matter.

Signed,