

Wisconsin County Forests Association

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August 21, 2015

Rob McConnell, Chair
Wisconsin Off-Road Vehicle Council
635 North Pine Street
Reedsburg, WI 53959

Regarding: Concerns from Wisconsin County Forest Administrators

Dear Chair McConnell and ORV Council Members:

Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA) represents the forestry interests of 29 counties with lands enrolled under Wisconsin's County Forest Law (state statutes §28.10 and §28.11). Collectively our member counties manage nearly 2.4 million acres of forest lands, the largest public ownership in the state. Many of our county forest administrators or members of their staffs also serve as motorized recreation trail coordinators in their respective counties.

It has come to our attention the ORV Council is beginning to question the need for funding sustainably built and maintained ATV/UTV trail systems on our county forests. As you are aware, currently nearly 90% of public ATV/UTV trail systems are on county forest lands. Wisconsin's County Forest Administrators are deeply concerned with the direction Wisconsin's current ORV Council appears to be taking.

Our county forest lands are managed for a variety of recreational uses, both motorized and non-motorized. Our county forest lands are third-party certified as sustainably managed under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) forest certification standards. This certification is extremely important to Wisconsin's \$20 billion forest products industry. Our county forests receive top dollar for stumps on offered timber sales, we believe certified fiber is one factor. Timber sale revenue is important to our counties and results in over \$30 million of revenue each year. This timber sale revenue directly offsets local tax levies.

Over the past 10 years we have undergone annual forest certification audits and the subject of building and maintaining sustainable motorized recreational trails has arisen time after time. As public land managers, it is the responsibility of county forest administrators and their staffs to ensure stable soil conditions and maintain water quality during all recreational and forest management activities. This is a responsibility we do not take lightly.

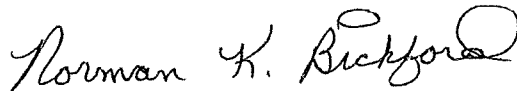
Trail rehabilitation is an important component in preventing erosion, maintaining water quality, and ensuring a safe riding experience across many different soil types and terrains. Wisconsin's County Forest Administrators take pride in the quality, sustainable trail systems they are able to provide for Wisconsin's ATV/UTV riders. We have enjoyed an outstanding working relationship with WATVA and its leadership during the development and design of trail systems on our county forests.

We urge you to consider all of these facts as you review applications and award funding for our ATV/UTV trail projects. Please do not force us into a situation where decisions between properly maintaining or closing ATV trail systems will need to be made. We are disheartened to hear of the riding experience we believe a minority of ATV/UTV riders are looking for, yet the current ORV Council appears to promote. We will not be able to accommodate trails providing a rough, muddy, unsafe experience that demonstrates a complete lack of respect for the natural resources we manage on behalf of all citizens of our State.

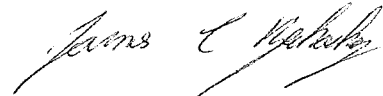
In order to continue development and maintenance of a sustainable ATV/UTV trail system our counties need to receive the necessary funding for our proposed rehab projects, including proper, sustainable trail surfacing material.

Thank you for considering this input, if we can be of any further assistance, or if you would like to engage in continued dialog on this matter in a more formal setting, please do not hesitate to contact our WCFA office.

Respectfully,



Norman K. Bickford, President
Wisconsin County Forests Association



James C. Zahasky, President
Wisconsin County Forest Administrators

Cc Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker
Cathy Stepp, WDNR Secretary
Paul DeLong, Wisconsin State Forester
Joe Schwantes, WDNR County Forest Specialist
Gary Eddy, WDNR Law Enforcement
Randy Harden, President, WATVA