

## Appropriate Uses for the Northern Highlands-American Legion State Forest

A crisis is coming for the Northern Highlands-American Legion State Forest (NH-AL). The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board may shortly establish miles of trails within the NH-AL for recreational use of All Terrain Vehicles (ATV's). This decision may come as soon as spring or early summer of 2007. ATV traffic in the NH-AL is unprecedented. Soon it may be common.

This state forest, an element of the *public domain*, should include ATV's in addition to existing recreational users, **according to ATV supporters**. Hikers, skiers, snowshoers, bicycle riders, hunters, fishing enthusiasts, campers, kayakers, canoeists, licensed on-road vehicles, and other users may soon have to **move over and accept ATV traffic as well**.

Most of the existing users listed above share common traits. They are substantially self-propelled, and silent. The fishing enthusiast, pursuing a silent and patient quest, may occasionally operate a motor to change positions. But, all move gingerly.

ATV operation, in contrast, dominates and trumps all of the experiences of the self-propelled, silent users and those of natural residents as well. The ATV overpowers its immediate pathway and a significant corridor alongside. The dominance is exerted by the vehicle energy, vibrations, engine throb and by mechanical components in motion. The ATV calling card is the scent of combustion fumes. The ATV can serve as an effective host for transport of alien plant species. The ATV can introduce great numbers of human visitors, whisking them rapidly in minutes over substantial distances, amplifying the impact of one individual operator upon the NH-AL by many times compared to the imprint of one user on foot. The ATV machine is an alien in a near-wilderness surrounding.

Alien, overbearing, recreational machinery within the NH-AL is *inappropriate*. The NH-AL was conceived to preserve a forest in its almost-original condition. Persons interested in machinery can pursue this interest *almost anywhere else they choose in Wisconsin*. ATV machines already have access to nearly 6000 miles of trails and routes elsewhere in Wisconsin. The NH-AL offers a recreational experience free of the machinery so abundant elsewhere. It is *appropriate* to keep NH-AL free from recreational machinery.

Because someone **wants** to pursue an interest in the *public domain* does not mean that person has a **right** to pursue that interest. The *public domain* is **already guided by rules that we all accept every day**. Operating a motor vehicle on public roads is open only to persons carrying a valid driver's license. Persons wishing to practice certain professions in the *public domain*, for a fee, must first achieve proficiency and secure a license: Doctors; Dentists; Architects; Airline pilots, are all examples. Lakes in Wisconsin designated as "no-motor lakes" are *appropriate* only for boaters using oars or paddles. It is *appropriate* to drive a vehicle on public roads, only with a license. It is *appropriate* to practice law in the *public domain*, for a fee, but only as a licensee.

In establishing a near-wilderness preserve like the NH-AL, the founders surely imagined that users propelling themselves through the preserve substantially under their own power represented an *appropriate* user population. It is unimaginable that originators of such a resource ever considered dominating recreational machinery as *appropriate* for the forest.

It is **right** to **prohibit** ATV traffic in the NH-AL. The public has the **authority to prohibit** *inappropriate practices* in a portion of the *public domain* such as the NH-AL. There are precedents for the exercise of these controls throughout our society.

It is *appropriate* to contact the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board to tell the members how you feel about All Terrain Vehicle traffic in the Northern Highlands-American Legion State Forest. Instructions elsewhere in this website show how to contact the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board.

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