

Off-Highway Vehicle Use in Minnesota

Goal

To achieve environmentally-sound management of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) on Minnesota's public lands through planning and review of prospective trails, enforcement, and restoration of damaged lands.

Background

Today there are 274,310 registered ATVs in Minnesota. Compare that to 130,000 in 2000 and to 70,000 in 1995. The University of Minnesota Tourism Center predicts ATV registrations will increase 244% in the next 10 years! The growing and seldom enforced use of ATVs on public lands results in habitat degradation, air and noise pollution, soil compaction and erosion, the spread of non-native invasive species, and growing conflicts with traditional, quiet, non-motorized recreationists.

Of greatest concern to us is the impairment to the wilderness character of the BWCAW and the surrounding Quetico-Superior ecosystem. Under a Minnesota law passed in 2005, all off-highway vehicles like ATVs, dirt-bike motorcycles, and 4x4 mudder trucks are allowed to run through 74% of our state forest lands, those lands lying north of U.S. Highway 2. This boundary, which runs from Duluth to the North Dakota border, allows such vehicles to ride on all state forest trails except those posted as "closed." In other words, if someone created a new trail today it would be perfectly legal for someone tomorrow to ride on that trail. This is what turns Minnesota state forest land into a spider web of trails, and prevents the majority of anglers, hunters, hikers, campers and other recreationists from enjoying a traditional, quiet, non-motorized outdoor experience. According to a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) 2002 study, 78% of deer hunters do not use an ATV in any way. Today, only 5.6% of Minnesotans own an ATV. Yet, the Minnesota DNR has classified most state forest land open for ATV use.

Solution

See [ATV legislation affecting the BWCAW](#).

<http://www.friends-bwca.org/programs/Off-Highway%20Vehicles.html>