



W.J. McCabe Chapter

January 21, 2002

Donald W. Buchout
Minnesota DNR
Office of Management and Budget Services
500 Lafayette Rd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Mr. Buchout,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Moose Walk ATV trail. I live in northeastern MN and frequent this area quite often. I am writing on behalf of the McCabe chapter of the Izaak Walton League. I am the president of this chapter as well as the Regional Vice President of the MN Division. I was also a member of the northern Carlton and southern St. Louis county OHV planning committee.

The Izaak Walton League would like our forest areas to be managed as “closed unless posted open.” The idea of building designated trails under the current “open” classification does not make any sense. The current forest classification does not allow for proper enforcement of the criteria set up for OHV trail corridors. The criteria used by the planning committees were to avoid wetlands, avoid sensitive resource areas, avoid or mitigate stream crossings and to use the existing trails where possible. Under the current forest classification, anything that is considered a trail is open to OHV use. Designing new ATV trails will only open up more sensitive areas to be damaged by ATV use.

ATV use is growing at an extraordinary rate. With the designation of the Moose Walk trail and others across our state, ATV use in our state will increase. I realize that ATV users have accumulated money to build the proposed trails, but who is paying for the enforcement of proper ATV use on our public land? There is no question that these machines do cause damage to our public forest land. Who is currently paying to repair the damage done by these machines? Why is the money that has been collected for trails not being used to repair damage and enforce the rules that protect our forest land?

Specifically, we want you to address the following concerns and questions:

- Under our current system, rider groups propose a trail and then work with land owners and with the DNR Trails and Waterways division to design the trail. After the trail is completed, who is responsible for trail maintenance?
- If the user groups are responsible, what training will the DNR provide to these individuals to insure that it is properly done?
- What recourse does the public have if the maintenance is not properly done?
- What does the DNR plan to do about conflicts that arise from the proposed trail? Many user groups are involved in low impact use of this area. What specifically is the DNR doing to insure these users are assured a quality outdoor experience on our public land?
- When user conflicts arise, what specific criteria has the DNR established to A) allow people to lodge complaints, and B) address those conflicts?
- Does the establishment of this ATV trail in any way assert that this use will be the priority use of this trail and area when the DNR assesses user conflicts or future land use management plans?
- Since it is reasonable to believe that the establishment of this trail will attract new ATV riders to this part of the state, what specific plan has the DNR established to control off-trail riding, or the damage that will occur from it, as these new users begin to pioneer spur trails?

In general, we believe an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should be completed on this and other proposed trail systems in Minnesota. The EIS should address the impact of the current unregulated ATV use, as well as alternative uses for the areas. If the trails are created, the DNR needs to close current trails that do not meet the original criteria of the OHV planning.

We realize that OHV recreation is a part of our multiple use trail system. We do believe that it is important to minimize user group conflicts. We remain greatly concerned that the state is proposing this elaborate network of trails, under the guise of “managing” this recreation, yet is unable and unwilling to restrict off-trail use. Until this area of concern is addressed, the concept of “managed use” rings hollow.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Moose Walk ATV trail. I look forward to your response to our questions.

Thank you,

Darrell Spencer
 President
 W.J. McCabe Chapter
 Izaak Walton League of America.