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Dear Member of the Natural Resources Board:

Over the past few months, you have received and reviewed many letters of concern over the proposed ATV trail in the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest (NHAL). These letters have provided sound biological, ecological, and sociological arguments to continue to exclude ATV's from the NHAL. To avoid repetition, I simply want to let you know that I strongly agree with the compelling evidence provided to you by these very thoughtfully written letters. My intent is to inform you that the concern about ATVs in the NHAL is not new.

Enclosed is the proposal for the "E. M. Griffith Forest Restoration and Recreation Area", presented to the Department of Natural Resources in 1996 during the most recent Master Planning process for the NHAL. This proposal was a joint effort of the Northwoods Conservation Association (NCA) and the Environmentally Concerned Citizens of the Lakeland Area (ECCOLA) to "establish a Northern Lake and Forest Ecosystem Management and Demonstration Area by managing the entire lake-water ecosystem as a single landscape." ATVs were addressed in the document (see pp.32-33) and while realizing "there is some legitimacy to their demand for a place to operate.....Others argue that they disturb other forest users with their noise and cause excessive damage to trails and forest vegetation." **The document concluded that ATV use within the proposed area is "incompatible and unacceptable."**

The NRB/DNR commissioned ATV Stakeholder Group's goal was to evaluate the **feasibility** of an ecologically sustainable ATV trail/corridor within the NHAL. Opponents who attended some of the Stakeholder meetings felt the goal was more to **force** an ATV trail/corridor in the NHAL. The mere fact that they have completed their map of ATV trails/corridors through the NHAL does not mean their proposed plan is **feasible**! I ask that you consult with experts (both DNR and non-DNR) and query them in regards the ecological feasibility of these ATV corridors coursing across wetlands (there are 9 proposed wetland crossing including a 2600 foot crossing on Birch Springs), along the boundary of State Natural Areas, through Native Community Management Areas, paralleling Scenic Management Areas (Rustic Road Hwy K in Star Lake), along steep banks adjacent to Plum Creek.

Under the DNR's "**Guidance for All-Terrain Vehicles Use on Department Lands**" and within the section "**Criteria for Evaluating ATV Use on Department Lands**" it states trails "**should be located away from identified sensitive areas such as high-quality natural communities, wetlands, nesting areas, wild resources, scenic areas, and unique aquatic or terrestrial habitat.**"

Also, within the same referenced section it states: **“In some cases, analysis of one (such as property designation, potential effects on the resources, etc.), or more, of the criteria will result in a determination by the Department that the proposed ATV use is not feasible.”**

Simply stated, the Stakeholder Group has themselves proven that the proposal for an ecologically sustainable ATV trail/corridor within the NHAL is not feasible as they have not followed the DNR’s own guidelines!!

The decision you make in regards to allowing or not allowing ATV’s will have a **profound** effect on the future of the NHAL for generations to come. Based on the evidence of the Stakeholder Group proposal deviating from the DNR’s guidelines, I ask that you vote NO to ATV’s in the NHAL.

Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

Jennifer Engstad-Heitz, Organizing President
Northwoods Conservation Association (1990-1995)

Editor’s Note: ‘E. M. Griffith Forest Restoration and Recreation Area Proposal’ and the DNR’s “Guidance for All-Terrain Vehicles Use on Department Lands.” are both available as “Documents” under the ATV Topic on the www.starlake.org webpage.