

PLUM LAKE RIPARIAN HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION POSITION REGARDING ATV USE AND TRAILS IN VILAS COUNTY

In April, 2007 The Plum Lake Riparian Homeowners Association membership (over 300 individuals) voted overwhelmingly to oppose the development of All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) trails for recreational purposes on public lands and roadways in the area of Plum Lake, The Town of Plum Lake and Vilas County. The reasons for opposition to ATV recreational use are numerous; however the primary objections are the following:

- Safety Concerns: Many accidents have occurred because ATV users disregard safety procedures, are unfamiliar with the vehicle, are traveling too fast for the trail or are on unfamiliar trails. The severity of injuries range from minor to severe and even death.
- Environmental Impact: The impact on the environment accompanying ATV use often has been devastating. Vilas County's attraction for many people who come here from all over the United States, and indeed from all over the World, lies in the beauty and serenity of the forests and lakes. The wildlife, wetlands, and old growth forest stands will be significantly damaged, and in some instances destroyed by the introduction of ATV trails. The Plum Lake Riparian Homeowners Association is working hard to prevent the spread of invasive species in Plum Lake. If an ATV trail is located anywhere within the Plum Lake watershed we run the strong likelihood of reversing the efforts to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Additionally, the erosion that follows the advent of an ATV trail will provide a ready conduit for non-aquatic species which attach themselves to the tires and undersides of ATV's, as well as to the tires of the trucks and trailers that transport the ATV's to and from trails. Not only will lakes, streams and creeks in the county's watersheds be adversely affected or destroyed, but also wetlands and forest areas as well. In addition, the impact of the noise level on both wildlife and humans will be devastating.

Studies have found that recreational ATV users comprise only about 1/5 of the total recreational participants. Recreational users include hikers, bicyclists, hunters and fishermen among others. Further, it is established that where ATV use exists, these other recreational participants leave the area. ATV use is incompatible with these other activities. Therefore, it can be expected that there will be an economic loss due to the reduction in total number of visitors.

Department of Natural Resources Personnel and the Vilas County Sheriff's Department have stated emphatically, that they can not enforce the laws on the ATV trails without significant increases in both funding and personnel. This is not only a safety issue but it is a legal issue as well. ATV's have been known to disregard No Trespassing signs and go on private property as well as the heavily used Bike Trails that have been established.

Many Wisconsin counties have established ATV trails. There is no shortage of areas for ATV recreational activity. However Vilas County's natural environment is unique and fragile and

ATV use in this county will result in unacceptable consequences. There is no need to expand ATV activity at the expense of Vilas County's pristine and fragile environment.

The primary mission of the DNR is to preserve and maintain the natural environment. The DNR Master Plan for the Northern Highland and American Legion State Forests notes that "If no suitable sites are found to be feasible, no trail will be designated." (NHAL Master Plan, pp. 65-166) The Plum Lake Riparian Homeowners Association submits that there is no suitable trail site in The Town of Plum Lake, and none in Vilas County. Therefore no trails should be established in the Town of Plum Lake and in Vilas County.

The Plum Lake Riparian Homeowners Association believes it is everyone's responsibility to conduct strong stewardship to maintain and preserve our environment in as natural and pristine a condition as possible. It has been firmly established that ATV use and trails are contrary to this goal and therefore this board, at the direction of an overwhelming majority of the Association membership, opposes the introduction of recreational ATV trails and use on public lands and roadways in the area of Plum Lake, The Town of Plum Lake and Vilas County.

Board of Directors, Plum Lake Riparian Homeowners Association
June, 2007