

VILAS COUNTY LAKES ASSOCIATION

**P.O. Box 494
Eagle River, WI 54521-0494**

Resolution 2007.2

ATV Trails in the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest

Whereas - Stakeholders have been directed by the Master Plan to recommend potential suitable and sustainable ATV trail sites in the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest (NHALSF) using criteria from the Guidance for All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Use on DNR Lands; and

Whereas - the 60 miles of ATV trails proposed by the Stakeholder group violate the Master Plan and the DNR criteria because they are not sustainable, not environmentally responsible and not socially appropriate; and

Whereas - strong evidence based on good science, ethics and aesthetics shows that the majority opinion of the Stakeholders has not found suitable ATV trail sites in the NHALSF. In this case the Master Plan states, “if no suitable sites are found to be feasible, no trail will be designated”; and

Whereas - the NHALSF with over 900 glacial lakes, many headwater streams and extensive wetlands offers an aquatic-forest habitat of global significance; and

Whereas - scientists in the Biotic Inventory of the NHALSF have delineated four Macrosites that represent the most significant and functional natural communities remaining in the state; and

Whereas - these communities provide essential habitat for native plants and animals, migrant species and many rare and endangered species

Whereas - the proposed ATV trails pass through the heart of three of the four Macrosites that scientists have given “strong protective designation”; and

Whereas - the proposed ATV trail is routed within one half mile or less of the shore of eleven undeveloped lakes, scientifically ranked as high quality water bodies with functional, intact ecosystems; and

Whereas - the proposed ATV trail crosses five wetlands in Iron County and two crossings of the Manitowish River plus six wetland crossings in Oneida/Vilas counties including Plum Creek, a Class A trout stream; and

Whereas - DNR Endangered Resource scientists have warned that invasive plant species are present on the Oneida/Vilas trail and ATVs have a great propensity to spread invasives over long distances; and

Whereas- the NHALSF represents the largest and most significant watershed in Wisconsin which ensures healthy lakes, rivers and healthy groundwater; and

Whereas - ATV trails constructed 12 feet wide with 2-foot shoulders on each side and surfaced with gravel will compact the soil and interfere with natural patterns of water drainage and infiltration; and

Whereas - we believe we should continue to build our northwoods economy on the values that have been drawing the majority of people north for generations, clear, undeveloped lakes, quiet campsites, nature study and peaceful sunsets; and

Whereas - on behalf of the future of the NHALSF we must carefully monitor human impact on the forest ecosystem and understand that there is a limit to what even this large forest can endure and still remain healthy; and

Whereas - people are beginning to understand that their personal health and the health of the land are intertwined; and

Whereas - there are many other potential ATV trail sites in Wisconsin that haven't been explored, it is wrong to force ATV trails into the priceless NHALSF where they don't belong;

Now, therefore be it resolved - that the Vilas County Lakes Association and its hundreds of members wish to protect and preserve the resilience of the NHALSF ecosystems which sustain our quality lakes and rivers on which the economy of Vilas County depends. Vilas County Lakes Association urges the Natural Resource Board to please remove the NHALSF from consideration as a site for ATV trails.

This resolution was adopted by a unanimous vote of the officers and directors of the Vilas County Lakes Association on the 27th day of June 2007.

_____, Secretary