



Memorandum of Support

S. 5105/A. 2481 “AN ACT to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to prohibiting the use of all-terrain vehicles within the Forest Preserve, the Long Island central pine barrens and the Albany pine bush preserve”

Protect the Adirondacks supports this legislation to protect the most important fragile, natural, and wild areas of New York from the abuse of All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs). PROTECT believes that ATV riding is an intensive, and often environmentally abusive recreational activity, that should be relegated to private parks, such as the sport of motocross racing, and on industrial forestlands where the state has purchased conservation easements, which have an adequate maintained road network. Other lands that the State of New York has worked to protect, such as the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve and the Long Island Pine Barrens, among other areas, need to be statutorily protected from ruinous ATV use.

ATV use is appropriate in the Forest Preserve only for special use by disabled individuals to gain access to wild areas with appropriate infrastructure and through a permit program. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has developed many such opportunities for disabled access to remote areas of public lands through use of ATVs. Dozens of opportunities have been provided for legitimate disabled individuals access to designated remote and wild areas under a state permit system that authorizes limited ATV use. This program has been successful and has been widely supported by the environmental community. Further public ATV use is not needed to provide access for the disabled community because a successful program already exists for legitimate disabled access.

ATV riding is a dangerous activity that must be regulated not only to protect natural resources from damage, but also to protect riders from injury. The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, and Consumer Federation of America all caution against ATV use for children and report on trends for injuries.

Impacts from ATVs Use is Markedly Different from other Outdoor Recreation

Protect the Adirondacks has monitored ATV abuse the “forever wild” Forest Preserve for more than a decade. Here are our observations:

1. ATV use destroys road and trail surfaces and Forest Preserve facilities, such as bridges, and cause soil and wetlands damage in ways that other motor vehicles do not. Impacts from ATV use is very different from hiking, mountain biking or snowmobiling.
2. ATV use creates deep ruts and mud pits on roads and trails that become impassable. It seems that ATVs are often ridden for the backwoods riding experience where one

can make the mud fly and tear up an area. This damage makes a road difficult to travel for all other users.

3. Roads and trails are widened by ATV users to avoid a damaged, impassable area, which causes further damage to the corridor's natural resources and wild character.
4. The wild forest character and the Forest Preserve experience are damaged by ATV use. Non-motor vehicle users that use the roads and trails damaged by ATVs find their Forest Preserve experience diminished as the roads are unattractive, deeply rutted, widened, and mud-filled swamps.
5. ATVs regularly leave designated roads to illegally blaze new trails through the Forest Preserve. ATV bushwhacking off roads is very destructive.
6. ATVs regularly trespass around gates and boulders that are erected to control motor vehicle traffic. ATVs can blaze trails through the forest to circumvent barriers in ways that other motor vehicles cannot.
7. ATVs regularly drive through streams, creeks and wetlands for sport rather than use bridges that provide motor vehicles with access over a stream, creek or wetland.
8. ATVs regularly trespass on snowmobile trails, designated roads that prohibit ATV use, and footpaths that intersect with roads. In short, ATV operators often go where they want.
9. ATV use has led to vandalism of Forest Preserve facilities, such as gates that control access.

These impacts are particular to ATVs. ATV damage remains widespread across the Forest Preserve due to illegal trespasses. In many Wild Forest units illegal trespassing by ATVs is widespread and continues unabated. Enforcement of illegal operations of ATVs is wholly inadequate.

Protect the Adirondacks urges the passage of Senate Bill 5105/Assembly Bill 2481.

For more information:

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