



Saint Louis County

Fourth District County Commissioner • 320 Miners Drive East • Ely, MN 55731
Phone: (218)365-8200 • Fax: (218)365-8205 • mcdonaldp@stlouiscountymn.gov

Paul McDonald

(Northeastern Regional ATV Joint Powers Board)

Representative Josh Heintzeman, Chair
House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

March 3, 2025

RE: Support for House File 566, House File 278, House File 281, and House File 279

Dear Chair Heintzeman and Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee:

On behalf of the Northeastern Regional ATV Joint Powers Board, I am writing to express our strong support for House File 566, House File 278, House File 281, and House File 279. These bills represent vital investments in Minnesota's ATV infrastructure and responsible trail management, ensuring safe and sustainable recreational opportunities for riders across the state.

The Northeastern Regional ATV Joint Powers Board is an effort by St. Louis, Koochiching, and Lake Counties to responsibly develop and maintain a world class ATV trail system in northeastern Minnesota.

House File 278, which aligns ATV registration fees with those of snowmobiles, is an important step toward securing adequate funding for trail maintenance. As ATV use continues to grow, ensuring proper upkeep and sustainability of our trail systems is essential for rider safety, environmental stewardship, and continued economic benefits to local communities.

House File 281 and House File 279 provide much-needed appropriations from the ATV Dedicated Account for trail development in northeastern Minnesota. These investments, supported by ATV Minnesota and the Northeastern Area ATV Joint Powers Board, will enhance trail connectivity, expand riding opportunities, and improve the overall quality of the trail system.

Minnesota's ATV trails are an important recreational asset that contribute to local economies, outdoor tourism, and responsible land use. We strongly encourage your support for these bills to ensure that funding and policy decisions align with the needs of ATV riders and the communities that benefit from this growing recreational activity.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your leadership and commitment to improving Minnesota's outdoor recreation opportunities.

Sincerely,

Paul McDonald

Paul McDonald

Chair

Northeastern Regional ATV Joint Powers Board

04 MARCH 2025

House Environment & Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee

Rep. Josh Heintzeman, Chair
Minnesota House of Representatives
Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senate Environment, Climate & Legacy Committee

Sen. Fong Hawj, Chair
Minnesota Senate
Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for House File 281 / Senate File 594 – Funding for ATV Trails

Dear Chair Heintzeman, Chair Hawj, and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Voyageurs Trails Society Inc. (VTSI), I am writing to express our strong support for **House File 281 and Senate File 594**, which allocate funding for essential improvements to the **Voyageur Country ATV Trail and the Prospectors Loop Trail**. These trail systems are critical components of northeastern Minnesota's outdoor recreation infrastructure, providing safe and sustainable access to public lands while boosting local economies.

As an organization dedicated to responsible trail development and maintenance, VTSI recognizes the importance of these investments. The proposed funding—\$380,000 for the Voyageur Country ATV Trail and \$175,000 for the Prospectors Loop Trail—will support much-needed **design, right-of-way acquisition, permitting, and construction** efforts, ensuring these trails remain accessible and environmentally sustainable for years to come.

These projects align with Minnesota's commitment to outdoor recreation, tourism, and economic development. ATV trails bring visitors to our region, benefiting small businesses, local communities, and residents who rely on outdoor tourism. Additionally, proper trail planning and infrastructure improvements help mitigate environmental impacts while enhancing public safety.

We respectfully urge you to support HF 281 and SF 594 to ensure these vital projects move forward. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Minnesota's outdoor recreation resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Drake Dill', with a stylized, flowing script.

Drake Dill
President
Voyageurs Trails Society Inc. (VTSI)



Koochiching Economic Development Authority

March 4, 2025

House Environment & Natural Resources Finance & Policy Committee
Rep. Josh Heintzemann, Chair
Minnesota House of Representatives
Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senate Environment, Climate & Legacy Committee
Sen. Foung Hawj, Chair
Minnesota Senate
Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for House File 281 & Senate File 594 – Funding for ATV Trails

Dear Chairs Heintzemann, Hawj, and Committee Members

On behalf of the Board of the Koochiching Economic Development Authority, I am writing in strong support of House File 281 and Senate File 594, which allocate funding for essential improvements to the Voyageur Country ATV Trail and the Prospectors Loop Trail. As the lead economic development authority for Koochiching County, tourism is vital to our economy, and these investments in our trail systems in our region are a proven economic driver that impacts the communities in Koochiching County and our surrounding neighbors.

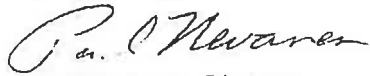
The Voyageur Country ATV trail system is prime example supporting the growing number of ATV riders, providing over 600 miles of safe and dedicated routes throughout St. Louis and Koochiching Counties. The proposed funding - \$380,000 for the Voyageur Country ATV Trail and \$175,000 for the Prospector Loop Trail - will support much needed design, right-of-way acquisition, permitting, and construction efforts ensuring these trail systems remain accessible and environmentally sustainable for generations to come.

These projects align with Minnesota's commitment to outdoor recreation and access, tourism, and regional economic development as well as highlighting collaborative public/private partnerships. Additionally, proper and thoughtful planning help mitigate environmental impacts while enhancing public safety.

We respectfully urge you to support HF 281 and SF 594 to ensure these important projects move forward. Thank you for your consideration and your efforts toward Minnesota's outdoor recreation resources.

P.O. Box 138 • International Falls, MN 56649 • Phone: 218-283-8585 • Fax: 218-283-4688
Toll-Free: 1-800-452-3569 • Email: keda@businessupnorth.com • Website: www.businessupnorth.com

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Paul Nevanen". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Paul Nevanen, Director

Koochiching Economic Development Authority



ATV Minnesota

P.O. Box 300 Stacy, MN 550

www.atvmn.org - 1-800-442-8826

ATV Minnesota – Your Voice to RIDE

March 6, 2025

Rep. Josh Heintzeman, Chair

House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee

Minnesota House of Representatives

Centennial Office Building

Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for House File 566, House File 278, House File 281, House File 279, and House File 1327

Dear Chair Heintzeman and Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee:

On behalf of ATV Minnesota, I am writing to express our strong support for House File 566, House File 278, House File 281, House File 279, and House File 1327. These bills represent critical steps toward strengthening ATV recreation, improving trail connectivity, ensuring proper maintenance, and making necessary policy updates that benefit Minnesota's riders and communities.

ATV Minnesota is the state's leading organization dedicated to advocating for ATV recreation, responsible riding, and sustainable trail development. Representing more than 70 ATV clubs and thousands of riders statewide, we work closely with local communities, state agencies, and policymakers to expand trail access, enhance safety, and promote the economic benefits of off-highway vehicle recreation.

- **House File 278:** Bringing ATV registration fees in line with snowmobile fees will ensure adequate funding for trail maintenance. As ATV use continues to grow, securing the resources necessary to maintain safe, sustainable trails is essential for riders and the communities that depend on outdoor recreation.
- **House File 281 & House File 279:** These appropriations from the ATV Dedicated Account will provide necessary funding for trail development in northeastern Minnesota.
- These projects, supported by ATV Minnesota and the Northeastern Area ATV Joint Powers Board will improve trail connectivity, access, and overall riding experiences.
- **House File 566:** Allowing ATV riders to use the shoulder of state highways to access local communities is an important step in connecting riders to lodging, fuel, restaurants,

and other essential services. This measure supports tourism and local businesses while improving safety by providing a legal, structured means for ATV travel.

- **House File 1327:** Updating the definition of ATVs is a necessary policy adjustment to ensure regulations remain relevant to modern ATV designs, sizes, and uses.

These legislative efforts will improve the overall ATV experience in Minnesota, enhance economic benefits to rural communities, and promote responsible riding and trail sustainability. We urge your support for these bills to advance the interests of the state's growing ATV community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your leadership in ensuring Minnesota remains a top destination for ATV recreation.

Sincerely,

Ron Potter, President
ATV Minnesota

MINNESOTA FOREST ZONE

TRAPPERS ASSOCIATION

SPORTSMEN *preserving* THE *trapping* HERITAGE

March 5, 2025

Rep. Josh Heintzeman, Chair

MN House Environment and Natural Resources Finance & Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for House Files 566, 274, 278, 281, and 279

Dear Chair Heintzeman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Forest Zone Trappers Association, we write to express our strong support for House Files 566, 274, 278, 281, and 279. These bills play a crucial role in improving access to Minnesota's public lands, enhancing recreational opportunities, and supporting sustainable funding mechanisms that benefit all outdoor enthusiasts, including trappers.

House File 566 (Skraba) – Modifications to ATV Operation on Public Roads

We support modifications that enhance the ability of responsible ATV users to access public roads. Many trappers rely on ATVs to access remote areas, check trap lines efficiently, and engage in responsible wildlife management practices. Ensuring that ATVs can legally and safely operate on designated public roads will improve accessibility for trappers and other outdoor users.

House File 274 (Skraba) – CJ Ramstad/North Shore State Master Plan

The North Shore region is a critical natural resource and a hub for outdoor activities, including trapping, hunting, and recreational riding. A well-developed master plan ensures that public access is preserved and managed responsibly. We support this initiative to maintain and enhance outdoor opportunities in this treasured region.

House File 278 (Heintzeman) – Grant-in-Aid Surcharge on ATV Registration

The Grant-in-Aid program is a vital funding mechanism that directly supports trail maintenance and development. Trappers frequently use ATV trails to reach their sets, and a well-maintained trail system is essential for safety and accessibility. This surcharge will provide necessary resources to sustain and expand Minnesota's ATV infrastructure.

House File 281 (Heintzeman) – ATV Trail Funding and Appropriations

Dedicated funding for ATV trails is critical to ensuring that Minnesota's vast outdoor spaces remain accessible. Trappers, along with hunters and recreational riders, benefit from well-

maintained trails. This bill ensures that money is appropriately allocated to support trail upkeep and expansion, which benefits both the outdoor community and local economies.

House File 279 (Warwas) – ATV Trail Funding and Studies

We strongly support additional funding for ATV trail development and studies. The expansion of trails benefits trappers by improving access to remote locations while ensuring that land use remains sustainable and environmentally responsible.

Access to public lands and well-maintained trails is essential for the trapping community and other outdoor enthusiasts who depend on Minnesota's natural resources. These bills collectively strengthen our state's commitment to responsible land use, outdoor recreation, and economic development. We urge the committee to support these important pieces of legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Ray Sogard
President
Minnesota Forest Zone Trappers Association
mfztapresident@gmail.com



March 4, 2025

House Environment & Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
Rep. Josh Heintzeman, Chair
Minnesota House of Representatives
Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senate Environment, Climate & Legacy Committee
Sen. Fong Hawj, Chair
Minnesota Senate
Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Support for House File 281 / Senate File 594 – Funding for ATV Trails

Dear Chair Heintzeman, Chair Hawj, and Committee Members,

On behalf of the International Falls, Ranier & Rainy Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau, I am writing to express our strong support for House File 281 and Senate File 594, which provide essential funding for the Voyageur Country ATV Trail and Prospectors Loop Trail. These trail systems play a crucial role in attracting visitors, supporting local businesses, and enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities in northern Minnesota.

Our office regularly receives inquiries from visitors eager to explore ATV trails in our area, yet we often have to direct them to existing trails 40 miles south. Expanding these trails into International Falls will not only improve connectivity with the Iron Range and the broader Minnesota trail system but also provide direct economic benefits to our region. More visitors mean increased business for our hotels, restaurants, and shops, helping sustain our community year-round.

The proposed \$380,000 for the Voyageur Country ATV Trail and \$175,000 for the Prospectors Loop Trail will support necessary trail design, right-of-way acquisition, permitting, and construction efforts. These investments ensure that the trails remain safe, accessible, and environmentally responsible while enhancing Minnesota's commitment to outdoor recreation and sustainable tourism.

We appreciate your continued leadership in supporting Minnesota's outdoor recreation infrastructure and urge your support for HF 281 and SF 594. These projects will strengthen regional tourism, boost local economies, and provide lasting benefits to our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to reach out if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

Katrina Heibel
Executive Director
International Falls, Ranier & Rainy Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau

That study on the economic benefits of ATV trails? Treat it with suspicion.

A model is only as accurate as the data fed into it.



ALEX KORMANN • The Minnesota Star Tribune A dirt trail for motorized vehicle use was covered in tire tracks in the Nemadji Forest in 2021.

By DANIEL WILM, RUSSELL SMITH, WILLIS MATTISON AND BRUCE ANDERSON

Readers recently saw headlines from a recent study that ATV trails in Minnesota attracted enough sports tourism in three northern counties to

generate \$36 million in 2023. This claim seems almost too good to be true — because it is.

Before taking this seriously, it is important to understand the context under which the study was conducted.

ATV clubs have formed a strong lobby seeking permission from the Minnesota Legislature to build more ATV trails. Currently there are 8,828 miles in the Forest ATV Trail System Inventory and a total of 100,000 miles accessible to ATVs statewide, according to Minnesota Department of Natural Resources data. This includes all county mileage.

The ATV lobby is supported by “scientific” research that claims to demonstrate the financial bonanza ATV recreation brings to local communities.

This research is typically sponsored or administered by the ATV clubs such as the economic impact study cited in a Minnesota Star Tribune article (“ATV riders spend millions, create jobs,” Jan. 12) and elsewhere.

This study collected rider frequency and expenditure data from riders on several selected trails and riding events, with an emphasis on online surveys. Problematically, rather than a random selection of trails from the trail network, five trail locations known for regular traffic were hand-picked by the clubs for trail counters (and these same vehicle count numbers were then applied to the rest of the trail system).

Surveys online were promoted through club social media targeting club members (not necessarily your everyday ATV rider) rather than having randomly selected ATV riders from the broader, defined rider population. It is not necessary to have a math or statistics degree to know that this gives new meaning to the word “bias.” It would be like polling people in line at Starbucks to find out their weekly coffee expenditure and then inputting that amount to represent every coffee drinker in the city.

The study applied a commercially available computer model that multiplied survey expenditures through the broader economy known as the ripple effect to come up with the \$36 million.

However, it's important to note that this computer model can only be as accurate as the data fed into it.

In addition, the survey study focused solely on monetizing benefits and forgot to monetize the associated financial costs. Examples of these costs would include road maintenance, lost revenue from other forms of recreation not compatible with off-highway vehicles and search-and-rescue, etc. There are also environmental cost impacts to consider, such as habitat degradation and fragmentation by trails and noise disturbance that negatively affect wildlife. Wildlife watching in Minnesota generated \$5 billion in 2022, according to DNR figures. Soil erosion and water degradation are also a cost factor, as well as invasive spread and management. Terrestrial invasives spread is a \$3 billion annual problem in Minnesota affecting economies, environment and ecosystems.

The health of our forests, wetlands and rivers is essential to the Minnesota tourist industry and economic development.

These natural resources can be and are monetized.

The St. Louis River annual benefits have been valued at \$5 billion to \$14 billion annually.

Environmental impacts and remediation are real financial costs to an economy that can be assessed with computer models and are not estimated in this study. Without that input, the study needs to be reconsidered.

Informed legislators know the premise of the study is flawed, but it serves the purpose of extending political cover to our representatives in St. Paul who prioritize Polaris, other manufacturers and ATV clubs over commonsense measures to help preserve public lands for all Minnesotan stakeholders. The health of our forests, wetlands and rivers is essential to the Minnesota tourist industry and economic development.

Daniel Wilm is a retired DNR forester and is with the Minnesota Public Lands Coalition. Russell Smith is a retired professor of marketing (Winona State University). Willis Mattison is an ecologist and retired Minnesota Pollution Control Agency regional director. Bruce Anderson is Forest Committee chair for the Minnesota chapter of the Wildlife Society.

Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
Re: House File 274

Dear Committee Members:

The Cook County ATV Club would like to thank you for considering HF274 to appropriate funds to update the C.J. Ramstad North Shore State Trail Plan. This update is long overdue. As you know, the current Master Plan was created in 1981.

Although the Cook County ATV Club would like to see segments of the C.J. Ramstad North Shore State Trail (NSST) opened for ATV travel, we understand that this amendment does not immediately open the trail. However, we encourage the legislature to fund this Master Plan update to allow the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to look at the feasibility of opening portions of the NSST.

There has been some confusion about Cook County's stance on the proposal to amend the NSST Master Plan. The Cook County ATV Club would like to reassure the committee that there is Cook County support for this amendment, as well as for the idea of allowing ATV travel on some sections of the NSST.

In the OHV section of the 2016 Cook County Comprehensive Trails Plan related to OHVs, the plan calls for collaborations between trail user groups, Cook County, the DNR, and Superior National Forest to "look at opportunities for multi-purpose use on the CJ Ramstad North Shore State Trail." On July 23, 2024, the Cook County Parks & Trails Department passed a unanimous motion to support a resolution to amend the NSST Master Plan. The Cook County Board of Commissioners followed that recommendation on August 27, 2024 and passed a resolution asking the DNR to amend the Master Plan, contingent on support from hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians.

A letter of support has been received from the Sawtooth Mountain Saddle Club. Talks are underway with the Superior Cycling Association. And the Cook County ATV Club is open to discussion with the Superior Hiking Trail Association, although the Superior Hiking Trail does not share the NSST treadway.

The Cook County ATV Club has initiated discussions with other outdoor groups regarding possible use of the NSST by ATVs. The ATV Club has gained support for this proposal from three Cook County Snowmobile Clubs (Cook County RidgeRiders, Superior Tofte Timberwolves, Cook County Ridge Riders) and two other clubs in Lake County (Silver Bay Trail Riders and Wild Country ATV Club of Two Harbors) to expand that shared use to ATVs. The ATV Club also has a letter of support from Cook County Sheriff Pat Eliassen who states that allowing ATV use on the NSST could lead to increased safety in the county.

The Cook County ATV Club is appreciative of this support from our community and we encourage the committee to recognize this by allocating funds for the amendment to the NSST Master Plan.

The Cook County ATV Club has a history of successful work on MN DNR grant-in-aid trails. We have seen the DNR's efforts to create a safe, sustainable, and enjoyable ATV trail system throughout the state. We are confident that the DNR will put legislative funds to good use. Please give them this opportunity.

We are very sorry that no one from the Cook County ATV Club is able to attend the committee meeting. However, we would be happy to speak with committee members. If you would like more information, please contact Cook County ATV Club secretary Rhonda Silence at ATVcookcounty@outlook.com or 218-370-0378.

Thank you for your consideration.

Cook County ATV Club

PO Box 455

Grand Marais MN 55604

ATVcookcounty@outlook.com

218-370-0378

OPPOSE HF 274- the CJ RAMSTAD TRAIL- not approved by Cook County Board of Commissioners and comes within 300-900 feet of locals homes in Cook County

From: Don Pietrick (pietricks@yahoo.com)

To: rep.josh.heintzeman@house.mn.gov

Bcc: rep.cal.warwas@house.mn.gov; rep.nathan.nelson@house.mn.gov; rep.kristi.pursell@house.mn.gov; rep.isaac.schultz@house.mn.gov; rep.rick.hansen@house.mn.gov; rep.sydney.jordan@house.mn.gov; rep.steven.jacob@house.mn.gov; rep.alex.falconer@house.mn.gov; rep.leigh.finke@house.mn.gov; rep.dawn.gillman@house.mn.gov; rep.john.burkel@house.mn.gov; rep.peter.fischer@house.mn.gov

Date: Monday, March 3, 2025 at 12:43 PM CST

Dear Representative,

My wife and I oppose ATVs on the CJ Ramstad .

Our home is one quarter mile from the trail.

In Winter, when outside, we can easily hear the snowmobiles. In Summer, the ATV noise would be comparable to snowmobile noise but much more disturbing because it would occur when more time is spent outside, more people are present, and windows are open. ATVs often travel in groups and clubs which would increase the noise level and duration. The trail runs very near Pike Lake and a good number of residences. Studies by the U. S. Forest Service indicate that ATV noise can carry 1-2 miles depending on the terrain.

We do not have a legislative lobbyist like ATV MN to represent us.

We are deeply concerned that like us, other local stakeholders were not consulted.

This legislation is impacted by a recent failed proposal brought to the Cook County Board of Commissioners for ATVs on the CJ Ramstad. The proposal was contingent on the support of 3 user groups hiking, biking and equestrian.

There were numerous letters and testimony from other stakeholders in opposition. We all understand because the Motion failed, the Cook County section of the CJ Ramstad cannot be included in the Master Plan of this legislation.

Concerns about ATVs is not just a few people complaining. A study by the Wisconsin DNR, Compatibility and Conflict in Outdoor Recreation, found that ATV riding is incompatible with every other recreational activity except snowmobiling. <https://www.fdlco.wi.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/6845/635620909952500000> (page 4-6)

Minn. Stat. 116B gives us a legal right to Quietude.

HF 274 fails to represent the interests and concerns of residents and property owners near the CJ Ramstad Trail. This omission is particularly troubling given the direct impacts these individuals experience. Right from the start, any proposed ATV trail planning should:
Include residents and property owners as key stakeholders.
Establish mandatory buffer zones between ATV trails and residential properties.
Prohibit ATV noise intrusion on to private property.
Conduct surveys and public hearings to gather input from affected residents.

This past Spring while sitting on my porch I was able to identify 16 different birds by their singing. -ATV noise would prevent this.

There is well established research that noise like that generated from ATVs is harmful to one's health and to wildlife.

Also, we question whether this use of public dollars is fiscally responsible in promoting an expensive discretionary activity by a small minority that is beyond the financial means of many Minnesotans.

Again, please oppose HF 274

Thank You for this opportunity to share our concern and opinion!

Lynn & Don Pietrick

Lutsen, MN



February 21, 2025

The Honorable John Burkel
658 Cedar Street
Centennial Office Building, 2nd Floor
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: ROHVA Supports HF 1327

Dear Representative Burkel:

The Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association (ROHVA) is a national, not-for-profit trade association formed to promote the safe and responsible use of recreational off-highway vehicles (ROVs – sometimes referred to as side-by-sides or UTVs) manufactured or distributed in North America. ROHVA is also accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) to serve as the Standards Developing Organization for ROVs.¹

Thank you for introducing HF 1327 which will amend the ATV definition (applicable to ROVs) to increase maximum weight from 2,000 lbs. to 3,000 lbs. ROHVA supports this legislation and urges its swift passage.

ROHVA's industry position calls for ROVs up to 3,500 pounds dry weight and 80 inches wide to be registered and operated on at least a portion of a state's public trail systems. While HF 1327 isn't consistent with this standard, it will allow for the operation of vehicles that weigh up to 3,000 pounds in appropriate areas. Heavier vehicles are particularly necessary to respond to consumer demand for enclosed cabs for vehicles and as heavier electrified ROVs will soon enter the market.

ROHVA respects Minnesota's ability to manage its public trail system as it sees fit by setting maximum weight limits for particular trails, which is generally achieved with public input through regulatory oversight of land management agencies. ROHVA also supports legislation that favorably impacts registration and legal access to public trail systems that is consistent with consumer sentiment. ROHVA's goal is to ensure that current and future ROV owners will be allowed to properly register and insure their vehicles and operate them on public trail systems where appropriate. This legislation advances those goals.

¹ An ROV is a motorized off-highway vehicle that is compliant with the ANSI/ROHVA-1 standard. More information on the standard can be found at <https://rohva.org/ansi-standard/>. ROVs are designed to travel on four or more tires, intended by the manufacturer for use by one or more persons and having the following characteristics: a steering wheel for steering control; a Roll Over Protective Structure complying with ANSI/ROHVA-1; an Occupant Retention System complying with ANSI/ROHVA-1; non-straddle seating; maximum speed capability greater than 30 mph; less than 80 inches in overall width, exclusive of accessories; and engine displacement of less than 1,000cc. Current models are designed with seats for a driver and one or more passengers.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 703-416-0444 ext. 3202.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Scott P. Schloegel".

Scott P. Schloegel
Senior Vice President, Government Relations

Cc: Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy



Testimony in Support of House File 1327 (Burkel)

J.R. Burke, Director, Government Relations

Minnesota House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee

March 6, 2025

Chair Heintzeman & members:

My name is J.R. Burke representing Polaris. With over fifty ATV dealers, hundreds of suppliers and tens of thousands of customers touching every corner of Minnesota, I am here in support of House File 1327.

According to DNR figures, Ramsey County, where we are today, ranks 11th of 87 Minnesota counties in recreational ATV registrations. Next door, Hennepin County, ranks 2nd, higher than all but St. Louis County. The facts are that while not all choose ATV recreation as their preferred method to get outdoors, our state is home to hundreds of thousands that do, tens of thousands of them residing here in the seven-county metro.

So where do metro and non-metro ATVers ride? It is a good bet many of them ride in communities like those represented by Chair Heintzeman, where according to the DNR, Crow Wing County ranks 4th of 87 counties in recreational ATV operation.

These DNR figures inform us that whether you choose to recreate on ATVs has nothing to do with where in the state you reside or whether you ascribe to one party or another. Instead, it is a Minnesotan thing...and something many in our communities choose to enjoy no matter what corner of the state you call home.

Your handout highlights today's reality related to permissible Class II ATV weight versus other forms of public outdoor recreation and the engineering facts already standardized in our industry. These facts disprove the notion that enacting HF 1327 will have a direct correlation to adverse impacts on Minnesota's managed ATV trail network.

When compared to other common public trail users, the fact is that even at the allowable weight provide in this legislation, the average Class II ATVs will still vary only slightly over Class I ATVs in trail surface pressure and just over double that of the average-sized hiker. The truth is that on a per square inch basis, you can press your thumb against the desk in front of you and apply more pressure than a 3,000-pound Class II ATV will apply against a trail surface.

As you can see, this is because low-pressure, flotation tires – standard on all Class II ATVs – increase in size as weight increases. The expansion of tire surface area contacting the trail effectively dissipates the added weight and prevents additional compaction or rutting as weight increases.

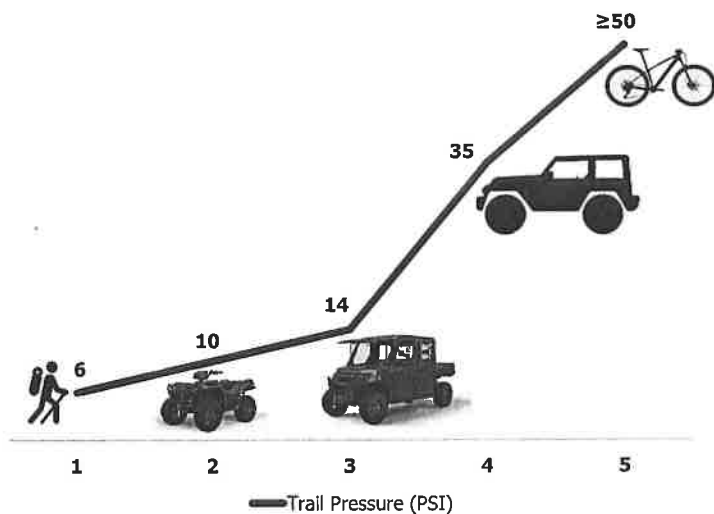
Despite these facts, Minnesota currently has one of the most restrictive ATV weight limits in the country. The most common weight limit across the country being 3,500 lbs., and states like California, Colorado and Michigan having no ATV weight limit at all.

Chair Heintzeman and members, the question this legislation presents is not whether to restrict ATV recreation, but how to support its benefits to our state in a managed way. House File 1327 is a reasonable step in achieving that goal and I urge your support.

Class II ATV Weight-to-Trail Summary



Average Public Land Recreation Trail Pressure



How ATV Tires Work

Initial Load

34% Load Increase

Air Pressure
16 psi



The Pneumatic Tire, National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, DOT HS 810 561 (2006)

"Flotation tires provide a larger footprint to distribute weight across a larger surface for less compaction and better handling."

Firestone Tire and Rubber Company

HF 1327 Creates No New Adverse ATV Trail Management Concerns

POLARIS



Re: HF1327

March 5, 2025

Chair Heintzeman and members of the House Environment Committee,

We write on behalf of the DFL Environmental Caucus. Our mission is to educate and mobilize the citizens of Minnesota to address the climate crisis and to protect, preserve, and restore the natural environment. We oppose HF1327 and urge you to vote no to this unnecessary and damaging bill.

Heavier ATVS mean increased environmental damage and *higher* trail maintenance costs.

The weight increase is not needed and will lead to more trail damage, soil erosion, runoff and degraded water quality. Trails that were built with Grant in Aid funding were built for 2000 pound machines. Allowing heavier ATVS would necessitate the expense of adding additional base to support the weight. We cannot afford this expense, in fact, in 2019, the *DNR 10 Year Capital Asset Need report* noted it had \$177 million dollars of deferred trail / road maintenance.

We urge you to reject this bill, to protect the natural environment the all terrain vehicle drivers seek to experience, and to avoid the added expense of trail upgrades and maintenance.

Sincerely,

Veda Kanitz, Greg Laden, DFLEC Legislative Committee Cochairs

Cc. Megan Bond, DFLEC Chair

Put Public Lands Before Corporate Profits. Oppose HF 1327 / SF 958



ATV Trails in Minnesota



Get muddy in Minnesota/Mille Lacs Area Tourism



ATV Trail Damage, Lutsen, MN

Dear Representatives and Senators,

Please put our public lands before corporate profits.

Oppose HF1327/SF958 that would increase ATV weight to 1 1/2 TONS!

- Electric Vehicles already exist below 2,000 lbs. This is not a rationale
- This bill is for all machines, including fossil fuel ones with an equivalent weight of a Toyota Corolla
- We cannot continue to increase the weight, size and power of these machines without limit

Polaris testified in 2022 that Wisconsin had increased UTV weight to 3,000 lbs.
BUT WHAT POLARIS DID NOT SAY IS:

THE WISCONSIN DNR WARNED OF WEIGHT INCREASE CONSEQUENCES:

- Safety risks for smaller vehicle users
- Increased trail maintenance
- Shortened trail life span and the need to re-engineer roads

THE WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION OPPOSES

and requested a 10-year moratorium on any weight increase.

"We feel the decision of adjusting ATV/UTV weight limits should not be driven by what machine manufacturers want but by what is best for the resource and by the dedicated professionals who care for it."

"Any increase in the weight limits must be matched with sufficient increase in trail maintenance and law enforcement funding"

See testimony attached.

"MAINTENANCE IS A BIG ISSUE

especially with the big new machines. They have so much power they can really tear up a trail if people aren't careful" - Dave Soular of Babbit ATV Club. Dave Soular has maintained 60 miles of ATV Stony Spur train for more than a decade.
(1)

- **We already cannot take care of what we have.**
- **DNR reported in 2019 it had a \$177 million dollar deferred maintenance backlog of trails and roads(2)**
- **DNR stated in 2024 that maintenance funds are limited and adequate maintenance should be a priority for any trail to be sustainable (3)**

PROTECT OUR PUBLIC LANDS AND WATERS:

Oppose HF 1327 / SF 958

Thank you for your informed consideration and for your service.

Sincerely, Minnesota Public Lands Coalition - www.mnplc.org

(1) <https://www.duluthnews-tribune.com/sports/bow-prospecter-atv-spur-joins-growing-northland-trail-network>

(2) <https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/legislativeinfo/policy-budget-fact-sheets/2019/10-yr-cap-asset-plan2019.pdf> (see table on page 15)

(3) DNR ATV Statewide Strategic Master Plan Draft- released 12/2024

Minnesota Public Lands Coalition is a growing grass roots group whose #1 imperative is to balance the explosion in motorized trails with thoughtful controls that will protect the quality of our lands, waters and wildlife for future generations. MNPLC does not seek to eliminate motorized trails, but rather implement policy that secures long term protection for our waters, lands and wildlife. We cannot continue to increase the weight, size and power of these machines without limit.

PLEASE OPPOSE HF 1327 - ATV WEIGHT INCREASE BILL TO 1 ½ TONS-

From: Don Pietrick (pietricks@yahoo.com)

To: rep.josh.heintzeman@house.mn.gov

Bcc: rep.john.burkel@house.mn.gov; rep.peter.fischer@house.mn.gov; rep.alex.falconer@house.mn.gov;
rep.leigh.finke@house.mn.gov; rep.dawn.gillman@house.mn.gov; rep.rick.hansen@house.mn.gov;
rep.steven.jacob@house.mn.gov; rep.sydney.jordan@house.mn.gov; rep.nathan.nelson@house.mn.gov;
rep.kristi.pursell@house.mn.gov; rep.isaac.schultz@house.mn.gov; rep.cal.warwas@house.mn.gov

Date: Monday, March 3, 2025 at 11:42 AM CST

Dear Representative,

I oppose HF 1327 for 2 reasons:

- it enables an activity on Public lands that is financially exclusionary to most Minnesotans because of the high cost of owning and operating these expensive high end 1 1/2 ton machines.
- it will increase Climate Change impacts and other environmental degradation.

HF 1327 is Exclusionary

Expensive ton and a half ATV/UTVs on MN public lands is out of reach for most Minnesotans pocketbooks!

A one and a half ton ATV will be an expensive high end model likely to cost around \$50,000.00. Additional costs in the thousands of dollars will include a trailer, possibly a vehicle capable of pulling the trailer with a one and a half ton load, insurance, license, registration, maintenance/repair, fuel, storage, and accessories (helmets etc.).

The MN DNR ATV Master Plan indicates a current ATV ownership/registration rate of 6 in 100 Minnesotans. Of this already small minority, how many Minnesotans can afford \$50 -\$100,000.00 for discretionary recreation? -I suggest 2 or maybe 3 out of 100 Minnesotans.

The high cost of owning a a ton and a half ATV/UTV is out of reach for many families who are facing challenges in affording day to day necessities.

We should not support use of Public Lands that are not within the financial means or recreational interests of most Minnesotans!

Climate Change and environmental degradation

Increasing the weight limit of ATV/UTVs will increase fossil fuel use worsening its Climate Change impact!

Larger, heavier ATV/UTVs and related activities that will be needed to support their use will lead to substantial increased burning of fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions in a number of ways:

- more fossil fuels used in the construction process to build trails to a wider and higher standard to accommodate heavier vehicles.

- increased fossil fuels used in trailering ton and a half ATVs/UTVs requiring bigger highway vehicles (trucks/SUVs) pulling bigger trailers ,consuming even higher amounts of fossil fuels. This goes in the opposite direction of the Minnesota Climate Action Framework that asks all state agencies to align with achieving that Framework's Stated goals of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Because transportation is the largest contributor to Greenhouse Gas emissions in the state, the Framework goal is a reduction of Vehicle Miles traveled by 20% by 2050. ATV/UTVing is a discretionary activity that should not be exempt when there are more environmentally sustainable options for outdoor recreation.

- Larger heavier ATV/UTVs will require more power and Fossil fuels used while operating.

-ATVs/UTVs have less capable emission-controls equipment and poor gas mileage compared to highway vehicles generating relatively higher amounts of pollutants per mile:

- To accommodate bigger ATVs/UTVs, bigger, wider trails are needed requiring increased removal of vegetation that sequesters greenhouse gases.

Additionally the increase in negative environmental impacts from one and a half ton ATV/UTVs appears to be a violation of the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA):

MEPA Law 116D.04, subdivision 6

No state action significantly affecting the quality of the environment shall be allowed, nor shall any permit for natural resources management and development be granted, where such action or permit has caused or is likely to cause pollution, impairment, or destruction of the air, water, land, or other natural resources located within the state, so long as there is a feasible and prudent alternative consistent with the reasonable requirements of the public health, safety, and welfare and the state's paramount concern for the protection of its air, water, land, and other natural resources from pollution, impairment, or destruction. Economic considerations alone shall not justify such conduct. Please oppose HF 1327!

Thank you for this opportunity to express my concerns and opinion!

Don Pietrick

Lutsen, MN



MINNESOTA DIVISION OF THE IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

March 5, 2025

Dear Representatives,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HF 1327, a bill that would increase the weight limit on All-Terrain-Vehicles (ATVs) from 2,000 to 3,000 lbs.

The statewide membership of Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America strives for the purity of water, the clarity of air, and the wise stewardship of the land and its resources. We are putting that pledge into action by strongly advocating for the wise stewardship of our state trail system. We believe that there is no need to increase ATV weight limits to 3,000 lbs. (1½ tons). Heavier ATVs mean increased damage and higher trail maintenance costs. The market already provides electric ATVs under 2,000 lbs. so an increase in weight to accommodate even heavier electric ATVs is not needed.

Please remember that we are not able to adequately maintain the trails that we have already built. And we do not have the financial resources required to repair the damage caused by heavier ATVs. In 2019, the Minnesota DNR published the 10-Year Capital Asset Need Report and noted that there were \$177 million dollars of deferred trail and road maintenance. The draft 2024 DNR ATV Statewide Strategic Master Plan confirms that “maintenance funds are limited.”

Heavier ATVs weights are not just a number, more weight has real consequence to the trails we enjoy. More weight means more trail damage. More weight means existing ATV boardwalks and bridges will need to be reviewed for adequacy and potentially rebuilt. The bottom line is that we do not have funding in the current budget to conduct these reviews and certainly not the financial resources that may be required to reconstruct existing infrastructure.

Thank you for opposing HF 1327, an unfunded mandate that is not needed. And thank you for your public service. We are grateful.

Sincerely,

John Siekmeier, President
Minnesota Division, Izaak Walton League of America

MINNESOTA DIVISION IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

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117 South First Street • Montevideo, MN 56265

March 6, 2025

Chair Heintzeman
Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
Re: Testimony in Opposition to H.F. 1327

Chair Heintzeman and Committee Members,

CURE is a rurally based, nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring resilient towns and landscapes by harnessing the power of the people who care about them. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony in opposition to H.F. 1327.

Minnesota's public lands (including our wilderness and aquatic management areas, scientific and natural areas, parks, state forests, school trust lands, and lands managed for counties by the state) contain some of the last remaining wild places in the state—places where clean water, intact habitat, and quiet recreation still exist. These lands provide refuge for fish and wildlife, protect drinking water, and support outdoor traditions that are central to Minnesota's culture, identity, and future quality of life. However, growing off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, when not properly managed, has contributed to habitat fragmentation, soil erosion, invasive species spread, and increased conflicts with other recreational users.

H.F. 1327 would further contribute to the negative impacts of OHV use by increasing the allowable ATV weight from 2,000 to 3,000 pounds. Heavier vehicles can cause more significant trail damage, increasing soil erosion, soil compaction, and runoff, which in turn can degrade vulnerable high-quality waters near trails. Heavier vehicles also mean increased trail maintenance costs as existing infrastructure—boardwalks and bridges—would need to be able to accommodate heavier vehicles and may require more frequent repairs or reconstruction.

Moreover, the bill would eliminate the longstanding limitation that ATVs bear “low pressure or non-pneumatic tires.” Increasing the risk of rutting damage by allowing heavier ATVs with much harder tires will have a predictably destructive result. It's a rutting double whammy. Again, this will greatly increase the costs of maintaining OHV trails and will harm delicate ecosystems as these new heavy hard-wheeled vehicles arrive in areas that have never experienced such high pressures.

Cars made for driving on pavement should not be permitted on our OHV trails, but this bill would allow it. This proposed definition is so permissive that it would allow a 2024 Mitsubishi Mirage automobile to

be defined as an ATV were it only 0.6 inches thinner.¹ Indeed, an unmodified Chevy Spark driven directly off a used car lot would be considered an ATV under the proposed definition.² If outdoor enthusiasts want to drive a vehicle that weighs 1.5 tons with road tires, they can drive their existing on-road vehicle—and do so *on a road*. If they want to go off-roading, they can use a vehicle that is more appropriate to off-road use as already defined in existing law.

Finally, this bill is not necessary to allow for the use of electric ATVs. Polaris already offers an electric ATV option that is below the existing 2,000-pound weight limit.

For these reasons, CURE urges the Committee to reject H.F. 1327. We appreciate the committee's attention to this important issue and its commitment to responsible land stewardship.

Sincerely,

/s/ Sarah Mooradian

Government Relations & Policy Director

CURE

117 S 1st Street

Montevideo, MN 56265

(320) 269-2984

sarah@curemn.org

¹ According to Mitsubishi, the Mirage is 65.6 inches wide and weighs either 2,106 or 2,084 pounds, depending on trim. See <https://www.mitsubishicars.com/cars-and-suvs/mirage/specs>. Off-road enthusiasts regularly modify on-road trucks and SUVs for off-roading, but it is unclear if anyone has modified a Mitsubishi Mirage for this purpose.

² Curb weight 2,246 pounds, width 62.8 inches. See <https://www.caranddriver.com/chevrolet/spark/specs>.

Amy Zipko

From: Stephanie Johnson <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, March 5, 2025 9:37 AM
To: Amy Zipko
Subject: HF 1327

I oppose the bill HF 1327 as Minnesota has a multitude of uses on these trails. This isnt about just more convenience for bigger vehicles, wear of the trail, noise and potential pollution must be considered and funding for the increase. There is no need to increase the weight as it accommodates ATVs now in the present state.

Thank You

Stephanie Johnson

Amy Zipko

From: lizz <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, March 3, 2025 9:25 AM
To: Amy Zipko
Subject: Oppose HF1327

Dear Ms. Zipko,

I strongly oppose HF1327 regarding weight limits. Increasing the weight limit will cause irreparable damage. The increasing push to destroy our precious land must stop. Recreation is one thing. Destruction is another.

I know, as do you, that once land, trails, and roadways are compromised there is no going back.

Please stop this harmful damage.

Curtis and Elizabeth Levang
20 Hungry Jack Road North

Amy Zipko

From: Denny Fitzpatrick [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 2, 2025 12:56 PM
To: Amy Zipko
Subject: OPPOSE HF 1327 - ATV WEIGHT INCREASE BILL TO 1 ½ TONS- Put Public Lands before Corporate Profit !

To all my Representatives,

There is no need for the increase in ATV weight to **1 ½ TONS**-- the weight of a Toyota Corolla . In 2022 the Star Tribune article noted that the increased weight was for enclosed cabs for heating and air conditioning.

Electric vehicles already exist below 2,000 lbs and Polaris makes them. Accommodating battery size for electric ATVS is not a rationale for increased weight. **Heavier ATVS-- mean increased environmental damage and *higher* trail maintenance costs**

MORE WEIGHT means:

1. MORE TRAIL DAMAGE, MORE SOIL EROSION, MORE RUNOFF and MORE WATER DEGRADATION
2. MORE soil compaction and less ability to absorb water and MORE RUNOFF resulting in increased trail damage
3. MORE horse power, means MORE Torque, means MORE trail damage
4. Boardwalks would flex more under increased weight and need to be re-anchored or re-built
5. Bridges built for ATV trails would have to ALL be reviewed for safety. How many could be in the center span section before collapsing under increased weight load ?
- 6.. All Grant in Aid Trails are built for 2000 lb machines. All natural trails would need an added base to SUPPORT heavier machines.

LACK OF MAINTENANCE FUNDS

IMPORTANTLY, we already cannot take care of what we have. Heavier machines would mean more trails that cannot be maintained or repaired.

In 2019, the *DNR 10 Year Capital Asset Need* report noted it had **\$177 million dollars of deferred trail / road maintenance.**

The 2024 the *DNR ATV Statewide Strategic Master Plan* draft stated that ***because maintenance funds are limited***, this must be a consideration in the potential creation of new projects. There is NO NEED to increase the weight of ATVs to **1 ½ TONS.**

Thank you for opposing HF 1327 and thank you for your service.
Sincerely, Denny FitzPatrick, Grand Marais