



STATE OF MINNESOTA

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GOVERNOR PAWLENTY PROPOSES RESPONSIBLE, CLEAR APPROACH TO ATV ISSUE

—Governor's proposal allows Minnesotans to both protect and enjoy state's natural resources —

St. Paul -- Governor Pawlenty today outlined a "reasonable, responsible approach" to address the controversial issue of managing All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use. The plan is designed to implement managed use on managed trails and gives the Department of Natural Resources clear direction on how to protect Minnesota's natural resources while at the same time effectively manage ATV trails.

"It's clear that Minnesotans want to both protect and enjoy Minnesota's natural resources," Governor Pawlenty said. "Our goal is to provide recreational opportunities for ATV users on a managed trail system that's beneficial to their enjoyment while properly protecting our precious natural resources. This plan gives the DNR the tools necessary to have an immediate, positive impact and an effective, long-term plan for ATV use."

The key components to the Governor's ATV management proposal include:

- ATV use would be allowed only on designated trails in state forests and other designated state trails. ATV use on other state lands would be prohibited.
- The DNR would review state forest classifications on a forest-by-forest basis and ATV use would be limited to only posted and designated trails reviewed and approved by the DNR.
- By January 2005, the Environmental Quality Board would develop and adopt rules for environmental review on recreational trails. Any trails designated would be subject to review under the new standards. The process would be public and would include community feedback.
- Rules for ATV use would also apply to county land within the designated state forest area, unless an exemption is adopted by the county board.

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- An interim exemption for the DNR from the environmental review process concerning the formal designation of trails, thus allowing the DNR to expedite the designation of a portion of the estimated 6,000-7,000 miles of existing and lawful, but undesignated trails.
- Enhance funding for trail development and maintenance by increasing the ATV registration fee \$5.
- Grant local units of government authority to regulate ATV use in ditches.

DNR Commissioner Gene Merriam noted that the policy changes are essential to implementing clear standards to evaluate recreational trail use. "The Governor's approach is a common sense solution to a complex situation," Merriam said.

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