

2007 – 01 OFF HIGHWAY VEHICLE (OHV) RULES

The Minnesota Division Izaak Walton League of America has worked in good faith with and respect the work of the MN DNR for managing our forests and waters for public use. When a minority of the users abuse and spoil the environment and flout traditional outdoor ethics, we feel strongly the need to speak out about the development and enforcement of strong regulations that address the problems caused by a lack of environmental ethics. Currently, OHV rules in Minnesota's state forests allow riders to inflict unacceptable levels of damage to our natural areas. Further, these rules place off-road vehicle users in conflict with other users, thus despoiling the experiences of a majority of outdoors people. These regulations must change.

The 2005 legislature, by designating all lands north of U.S. Highway 2 as "OPEN" unless posted "CLOSED," has made a mockery of management of OHV use on state forestlands. "CLOSED" postings are willfully removed. As a result, for the area north of U.S. Highway 2 there are no regulations de-facto. When legislative efforts end-run the responsible management decisions of professional DNR managers, the public is not being served. Our state forests should be managed based on the three tenets of sound environmental science; a) rely on scientific research and principles where it exists, b) where research does not exist, use precautionary practices, c) employ appropriate environmental planning before things happen.

An ethical hunter will hunt responsibly and transport downed animals to authorized trails. A work ethic is part of fair-chase hunting; every hunter, or hunting party, should only take game the individual or party can transport manually to an authorized trail. Our ancestors were able to hunt without motor vehicles; as part of our heritage, why are we are unable to do so in our recreation?

An OHV is a transportation device, not an appropriate recreational activity in itself for unrestricted travel in state forests. The DNR must be given the financial and legal resources to control abuses and violations of OHV riders.

We pay on all gasoline purchased in Minnesota excise taxes that are designated for OHV recreation. Those monies should be used not only to build OHV trails, as the funds are currently used, but also to regulate OHV use in order to protect the environment from abuse.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnesota Division Izaak Walton League of America in convention at Bloomington, Minnesota, April 29, 2007 urges the following actions.

- 1) The DNR Commissioner shall -order all forests to be managed as "CLOSED" until action is taken to restrict OHV activity to designated roads or trails. Operation of OHVs shall be restricted only to trails posted as "OPEN" Off-road crossing of wetlands and streams be prohibited. Cross-country travel shall not be allowed, not even to retrieve big game.
- 2) The DNR shall use gasoline excise taxes not only for the construction of trails but also for funding adequate enforcement, long-term maintenance, and damage payments related to OHV usage. This may amount to as much as 80% of excise tax revenues.

*Submitted by the J.W. McCabe Chapter
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