

# **RECORD OF DECISION**

## **Attachment A**

### **Minnesota Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area Environmental Assessment Worksheet**

#### **Public Comments**

**From:** Steven Ashbaugh  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** MN Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Friday, April 28, 2017 2:34:17 PM

I am supportive of this EAW for off road use.

Steve Ashbaugh

**From:** [Josh Bellows](#)

**To:** [MN\\_Review](#), [Environmental \(DNR\)](#)

**Subject:** Minnesota Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area EAW

**Date:** Monday, April 10, 2017 3:09:40 PM

After reading the EAW I am disappointed to see that this will not cater much to ORV use with only a small rock climbing area open to them. I think it would be much better served and more widely used if it had more trails capable of ORV use. With only three main areas in the state that cater to ORV use (Appleton, Spider Lake & Gilbert) it would be appreciated if newly formed recreation areas would cater to the ever growing ORV groups.

Thanks,

Josh Bellows

320-455-1732

788 County Road 35 West

Buffalo, MN 55313

# Response to EAW

Minnesota Valley Off-Highway Recreation Area, Renville County  
Patricia and Francis Buschette  
May 10, 2017

**Item 6-d. - Explain the project purpose; if the project will be carried out by governmental unit, explain the need for the project and identify its beneficiaries. The response to this question is that the beneficiaries of the project include the local government and the local economy.**

Economic development: it is not certain where this economic development is to be found. It remains to be seen how the park could benefit the local community. As far as the local economy, supporters refer to the sale of gas and food as the source of income. A common sense approach suggests that a return on investment is not realistic. In terms of the “snacks” that people are supposedly going to buy. Does anyone realistically think that anyone would load a large ATV and take off for Renville County without a cache of potato chips, pretzels, candy, and a tank of gas? Further, if participants come from the east, south, west, they will stop in Redwood Falls where there is a greater availability of these provisions. It does not take much experience to realize that a few hours on the OHV Park is going to result in dirt and mud plastered over clothing and a visit to a restaurant in this condition is not realistic. There is little to support the proposal – Renville County restaurants and gas stations are several miles away. In Renville County the closest hotel is in Olivia, Granite Falls (Yellow Medicine County) or Redwood (Redwood County).

Redwood County residents who are excited about this park right across the river from them are making no contribution to its expense.

**Item No. 8 - List all known local, state, and federal permits, approvals, certifications and financial assistance for the project. Include modifications of any existing permits, governmental review of plans and all direct and indirect forms of public financial assistance including bond guarantees, tax increment financing and infrastructure.**

Renville County has received funds through the Minnesota Department of natural resources as a master federal recreation trails grants program. The funding received is designated for planning and design activities. While the expense for planning has been substantial, it pales in comparison to the cost of the construction and maintenance of the proposed site. According to the environmental assessment worksheet, upon review all and approval of funding amount would be identified for trail maintenance and administration for the coming financial year. This begs the question of the cost of construction. At this point there seems to be no reliable information on the proposed cost of construction. While there are some enthusiasts within the county and outside the county, Renville County taxpayers will be tapped for funding. After months of research and discussion with Renville County residents, we believe there is little or no appetite for spending in excess of \$1 million for an OHV Disney Park.

**Item No. 9 describes the property. It includes the identification of an area as a remnant of native prairie located in the north east corner of the site**

There are always compromises to be made in the development of an area. However, the effort to incorporate land that includes native prairie would not seem to be adequate reason for such a compromise. It is difficult to believe that an ATV driver in control of a powerful machine is going to limit travel within prescribed trails.

**Item 9B requests information on the projects compatibility with nearby land uses, zoning and plans.**

The area adjacent to or nearby the proposed park includes residential properties. These building sites are located in some of the state's most beautiful settings. A proposed ATV Park would greatly diminish the residents' enjoyment of their properties. It is hard to imagine the effect of a dozen monstrous machines racing by one's house on the weekend afternoon when property owners have every right to enjoy the quiet and solitude of the property they purchased.

**Item No. 11 B Explains the usage of water resources and the opportunity for "water hole riding."**

Apparently areas that hold water during periods of normal or above normal rainfall and are landlocked and would be retained for the riders to utilize. It is our understanding that riding through such muddy waters provides an additional recreational opportunity. One wonders how this would affect the economic development that is to accrue to the county as wet and dirty riders make their way into restaurants and grocery establishments in the county.

**Item 12 C raises the issue of the handling of chemicals and hazardous materials on the site.**

The usage of such materials in an area raises concerns in this environmentally vulnerable site. The release of such hazardous liquids, according to the response, is expected to be rare and minimal but it is acknowledged that it can happen.

**Item 13 requests a description of the fish and wildlife resources and habitats and vegetation near the site**

A response acknowledges that the Minnesota River Valley has a high conservation value and that "conservation of all remnant native prairie including buffering is a high priority in Minnesota." The fact that there is a remnant native prairie within the site is troublesome.

In the same section, it is learned that the Minnesota Department of natural resources natural heritage information system as identified endangered, threatened, and species of special concern. It is recommended that ground disturbance be avoided and trails ravaged around the Prairie. I would not place much faith in an ATV driver in acknowledging the value of prairie grasses.

The report also includes acknowledgment of the existence of bald Eagle and other native wildlife. This section goes on to acknowledge the possibility of minimizing disturbance to wildlife including avoiding or minimizing impacts to remnant prairie. This does not sound like a failsafe process.

Some of this is to be accomplished by trail riders being encouraged in the rules and signage to stay on the mapped and signed trails. Trail riders, by virtue of their adventurous "fun-loving spirit" are not always predisposed to consider environmental issues.

**Item 16 relates to vehicle emissions.**

There is a description of the high volume of motorized activity due to farming, gravel mining and trucking operations. While the compromise of air quality and the attempt to mitigate noise is important, the value of farming, mining, and transportation has to far exceed the value of a recreational park. The response relating to noise intensity has been described as an “annoyance” to neighbors perhaps is one of the most egregious explanations of the worksheet. The worksheet quotes Renville County indicating that the noise would not constitute a nuisance in legal terms. The fact that noise complaints will be investigated is of little consequence for someone who will have to deal with this during much of the year.

A suggestion that nearby residents may hear the noise (if occupied at the same time) is unbelievable. In other words or leave your house, you will not be “annoyed.”

#### **Item No. 18 discussion of transportation issues**

There seems to be an effort to downplay traffic issues, comparing them with the current traffic patterns that serve the economic functions of the county. If traffic is so light that there is little impact, one wonders why the effort to push through a project with so little economic benefit, and with a potential to harm the environment, both for human quality of life and for the continued existence of animal and plant life.

**From:** [Scott Chadwick](#)  
**To:** [MN\\_Review](#), [Environmental \(DNR\)](#)  
**Subject:** MN Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Thursday, April 13, 2017 7:56:45 PM

I believe getting this atv park up and running is a great idea for the area. Things like this bring people into the area witch in turn brings in people spending money that wouldn't have normally been spent there that day. That in turn also helps with more tax revenue. Things like this are a win for everyone. Look at Appleton it's a great example.

Scott Chadwick  
505 9th ST S  
Olivia, MN 56277

**From:** [jason vicki Clouse](#)  
**To:** [MN\\_Review, Environmental \(DNR\)](#)  
**Subject:** Renville county"s  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 11, 2017 12:32:26 PM

Please make sure the county has a emergency plan in act .. and the study looks at all the water issue that may come from this park being on a ex sand pit how will it affect the environment if or when a fluid is spilled !

**From:** [jason vicki Clouse](#)  
**To:** [MN\\_Review](#), [Environmental \(DNR\)](#)  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 11, 2017 12:35:24 PM

I enjoy the quite drive in the summer watching the wildlife that live in the river bottom what going to happen to the eagles that many people come and enjoy in the summer?

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Jim Etzel Karlene Plante  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** ORV trail  
**Date:** Monday, April 10, 2017 7:21:18 PM

Please put the money to better use. Let ATV's, ORV's and other motorized destruction devices go in gravel pits and existing mines that have been destroyed already. They spread invasive plants, cause soil erosion, noise pollution, air pollution and more. No more motorized trails in the state. PLEASE!!

Jim Etzel  
Hackensack, MN

**From:** Darrell Forkrud  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** MN Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Thursday, May 04, 2017 4:17:56 PM

MN DNR Input for the Renville County OHVRA or in layman's terms an ATV Park.  
May 4, 2017

Darrell Forkrud is writing as input from our family since my wife and I now have purchased the Audrey Forkrud Trust located just to the Southwest & adjacent to the proposed park. This family farm of just 130 acres today has been in our heritage since 1882. We have enjoyed the "Peaceful Valley" as my Grandfather used to refer it as long as my 67 years can remember. My challenge to the DNR is why the push for this park that's so far away from population centers when the surrounding neighbors have been speaking out against it from the first proposal with a few exceptions. It would seem that with so many good uses of the state's "Legacy" funding which was to be a part of this land purchase from the Tufto & Zimmerman families that the DNR is better served using the funds elsewhere. We know that some of the Renville County administration had been prompting a look at this but to all of us who so much enjoy this current area's scenic peaceful recreation plus the great deer & turkey hunting we don't want you to come in to change that great history. There can be little doubt that a group of ATV's running through this proposed park would have a marked change in the land use and traffic around the area. We would challenge you to take your funds elsewhere and use them in areas that the state needs it like a plan to help with invasive species! Please feel free to contact us if you need input and we would appreciate if you keep us in the loop as to communication around this proposed OHVRA.

Darrell & Janice Forkrud  
5396 Lawler Beach Road  
Willmar, MN 56201  
Phone 320-262-3213 & cell 612-710-3551  
Email: darrellforkrud@gmail.com

April 25, 2017

To: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Ecological and Water Resources

Attn: Bill Johnson

RE: MN Valley OHVRA

Dear Bill:

I am 100% opposed to the MN Valley OHVRA. There is only one landowner who resides there who is in favor of it. The two absentee landowners that are selling the property for the MN Valley OHVRA are only in it for the money. Please put a stop to this project.

Feel free to contact me for further info. My cell # is 507-430-1907.

Sincerely,

David A. Forkrud  
PO Box 235  
Belview, MN 56214

**From:** Mikkell Johnson  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** MN Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 11, 2017 10:44:49 PM

Dear Bill Johnson,

I wanted to write and let you know that we are hoping that the new ATV trails in the Renville area are approved. We often end up going to the trails in Appleton right now, so it would be great to have another option. We often use local businesses when we go four wheeling, so I have no doubt that it would also positively impact businesses in the area.

Thanks

Mikkell Johnson

**From:** Phil  
**To:** [MN\\_Review, Environmental \(DNR\)](#)  
**Subject:** Atv trails  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 12, 2017 7:57:35 PM

I would love to see and have more Atv class one and class 2! It helps small towns bring money in with camper and buying gas, food, fire wood, extra!!!!!!

As an expert hevey equment operator for Landwehr I would be more then happy to help in a I can!!!

Thanks

Phil Johnson

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Tom Kalahar  
**To:** [MN\\_Review, Environmental \(DNR\)](#)  
**Subject:** MN Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 11, 2017 8:12:45 AM

I have just finished reading the EAW for the Proposed Renville County ATV amusement park and can see that the spin is on for more degradation of the Minnesota River Valley.

I worked in the conservation field for 36 years and can spot BS when I see it. The ATV proposal is and always has been a BAD idea and not popular with most of the residents of Renville and Redwood County. This is another example of a small group of people pushing a bad idea on the majority of the citizens. I'm very familiar with this site and know all the neighbors who by the way are all opposed to this park. I could easily do a EAW on this site and come up with a very different outcome than the one you have presented here. Take your pick water, wildlife, native prairie, land use, noise, Minnesota River, personal enjoyment of the valley will all be negatively impacted by this proposed park. The park will promote bad feeling though out the region including local, state and federal governments.

I find it unbelievable that the Department of Natural Resources would even consider this site as a ATV park. I suggest you ask your own people wildlife managers and other natural resources professionals what they think of this idea. I would also invite all or any of you out here for a personal tour of the site and area to talk to use before this grows into a nasty fight.

I could go on and on but see no need. We are a group of hundreds strong and will oppose this park at every stage of the development. We are prepared to fight this locally and at the state and federal levels. I would more than glad to talk to anyone in your Department about this issue.

Tom Kalahar  
[tjkalahar@gmail.com](mailto:tjkalahar@gmail.com)  
320-894-6644

**From:** Johnson, Bill H (DNR)  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** Mn Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Thursday, April 06, 2017 1:16:41 PM  
**Attachments:**

Hi Bill,

MDA has reviewed the EAW and does not have any comments. Thank you.

*Becky Balk*

MN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Agricultural Marketing & Development Division  
625 Robert Street North | St Paul, MN, 55155  
**651-201-6369 (Direct Line) | [Becky.Balk@state.mn.us](mailto:Becky.Balk@state.mn.us)**

May 8th, 2017

Bill Johnson  
Planning Director  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Johnson,

Thank you for providing the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) with the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the Minnesota Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area (OHVRA) project in Renville County. The mission of MDH is to protect, maintain, and improve the health of all Minnesotans. The careful planning and development of projects such as this one supports this mission and is an important step in ensuring health in all policies.

Mine Reclamation

Inadequate mine reclamation may result in undesirable outcomes, often not immediately observed, such as the focused infiltration of surface contaminants to groundwater, altered water quality in nearby springs and streams, accelerated soil erosion, and the creation of physical hazards, such as sinkholes. Where mining activities remove critical protective geologic materials above an aquifer, post-reclamation land uses have the potential to degrade groundwater quality.

The EAW notes that upon completion of mining activities, the mining-disturbed portions of the site not used for OHVRA purposes will be restored to prairie grassland. Although developed for silica sand mine projects, the Environmental Quality Board's (EQB) Tools to Assist Local Governments in Planning and Regulating Silica Sand Projects includes applicable tools that could be implemented on the project site to minimize impacts to groundwater quality from reclamation land uses. Additionally, although the site is not located within a wellhead protection area, MDH's Wellhead Protection Issues Related to Mining Activities also provides tools that could be implemented to minimize impacts to drinking water.

Well Construction

The EAW states that, "one well may be drilled in the future to provide potable water for trail users at the trailhead area." New wells that are constructed in Minnesota must be constructed according to the requirements of Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 103I, and Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4725 and must include a notification form submitted to the MDH Well Management Program (as noted in EAW's permits/approvals table). Well construction cannot begin before written acknowledgement from the MDH Well Management program of receipt of the notification form and that the related fees have been received from the driller or project proposer. Additional information is available

Bill Johnson  
MN Valley OHVRA

Page 2  
May 8th, 2017

on the MDH website at: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells/construction/>. For more detail, contact MDH staff at (651) 201-4600 or [health.wells@state.mn.us](mailto:health.wells@state.mn.us).

Health starts where we live, learn, work, and play. To create and maintain healthy Minnesota communities, we have to think in terms of health in all policies. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments on this EAW for the Minnesota Valley OHVRA project. Feel free to contact me at (651) 201-4907 or [david.bell@state.mn.us](mailto:david.bell@state.mn.us) if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,

David Bell  
Environmental Review Coordinator  
Environmental Health Division  
Minnesota Department of Health  
PO Box 64975  
Saint Paul, MN 55164-0975



**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**

May 10, 2017

Bill Johnson  
MN Dept of Natural Resources  
Division of Ecological & Water Resources  
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: EAW – Minnesota Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area  
T114 R37 S22 & S23, Sacred Heart Twp, Renville County  
MnHPO Number: 2017-1627

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Thanks you for the opportunity to review and comment on the above project. It has been reviewed pursuant to the responsibilities given the Minnesota Historical Society by the Minnesota Historic Sites Act and the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act.

We have reviewed the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) that was prepared for this project. Under **EAW Item No. 14 “Historic Properties”** the document references a Phase II evaluation report for a prehistoric archaeological site, however we have not received nor reviewed this evaluation report. If this site will be affected by the project, it will need to be evaluated to determine whether it meets National Register criteria. If the site will not be affected by the proposed project, please provide a description on how effects to the site will be avoided. We agree that no further archaeological investigations are warranted for the remaining project area.

Item No. 14 also references a “historic site”, which has been identified as the Tufto Farmstead which is located within the project area. Our inventory records indicate that there are two properties within the project area, a one room schoolhouse (MnSHPO Inventory # RN-SHT-006) and a farmstead (MnSHPO # RN-SHT-007). Perhaps RN-SHT-007 is the Tufto Farmstead that is referenced in the document? Is the rural schoolhouse still extant? Neither of these properties has been evaluated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The EAW also indicates that there are no proposed OHV trails on the historic farmstead and that interpretive signage will be installed adjacent to the property to educate visitors of its history. The EAW has determined that there will be no direct or indirect impacts to the property by the proposed project, but we have not been provided sufficient project documentation, historic property evaluations and specific project plans, to review in support of these findings. We recommend that you agency continue consultation with our office in order to address concerns presented in this comment letter.

Please note that this comment letter does not address the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and 36 CFR § 800. If this project is considered for federal financial assistance, or requires a federal permit or license, then review and consultation with our office will need to be initiated by the lead federal agency.

Please contact me at 651-259-3456 or [sarah.beimers@mnhs.org](mailto:sarah.beimers@mnhs.org) if you have any questions regarding our review of this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sarah J. Beimers'.

Sarah J. Beimers, Manager  
Government Programs and Compliance

**From:** Email P  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** MN Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Monday, April 24, 2017 9:53:20 PM

I would like to see more at riding opportunities in southern MN. Please keep me up to date on this project.

Jon Pancake  
19075 Eaglewood Rd  
Clearwater, MN 55320

**From:** Barb Partington  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** Mn Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 11, 2017 7:44:16 AM

Studies on OHV use have shown that 3/4 of the OHV users do not stay on the trails. Keeping users to designated trails will be very difficult. Enforcement is next to impossible.

It has also been proven that OHV are a big carrier of seeds. One document stated 2000 seeds per vehicle.

Once allowed in, OHV use will be very difficult or next to impossible to get rid of.

If it is a gravel pit now, with OHV use, it will likely stay close to the same. With only the sturdiest of weeds being able to compete.

--

Barb Partington  
30490 335th Street Way  
Lake City, MN 55041

**From:** Harley P  
**To:** [MN\\_Review, Environmental \(DNR\)](#)  
**Subject:** MN Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Sunday, May 07, 2017 12:18:48 PM

Harley Pfarr  
PO Box 321  
370 N Quarry Dr  
Morton, MN 56270

I am in favor of the proposed project. Southwest MN needs an OHV/ATV trail. We have very limited places to ride ATV's in this portion of the state. Northern MN has many trails and parks for OHV's. I feel that if a trail/park gets built, it would draw more visitors to this area, benefitting the surrounding communities and businesses.

Sent from my iPad

**From:** George Radke  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** Mn Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Thursday, April 13, 2017 11:23:18 AM

This area is ideal for mining gravel as well as for ATV, OHM and general OHV use and we support the proposal for this use.

**George Radke**  
All Terrain Vehicle Assoc MN President - [www.atvam.org](http://www.atvam.org)

C (651)303-7897  
**Ride Smart Ride Safe**

**From:** [Chris Randleman](#)  
**To:** [MN\\_Review, Environmental \(DNR\)](#)  
**Subject:** NO MN Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 11, 2017 9:26:13 AM

To whom it may concern.

I am completely against this project, it is a waste of taxpayer dollars. Being from Renville County, the only financial benefit will go to the businesses in Redwood County.

Please don't let this happen in our river bottom.

Chris Randleman  
305 East DePue Ave  
Olivia Mn 56277

**From:** Ringgenberg, Curt  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** MN Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 12, 2017 1:59:48 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

I am in favor of and will support an off-road park in our area.

It is something that has been needed for a very long time as there is nothing in southwest mn at all.

Mr. Curt Ringgenberg  
58424 720th st  
Jackson, MN 56143

**Curt Ringgenberg**

Sr.Tech

**AGCO JACKSON ASSEMBLY COMPANY**

Tel:+1 507-847-7196 Cell:+1 507-841-1660

202 Industrial Park

Jackson, MN 56143

[curt.ringgenberg@agcocorp.com](mailto:curt.ringgenberg@agcocorp.com)

[www.AGCOcorp.com](http://www.AGCOcorp.com) [blog.AGCOcorp.com](http://blog.AGCOcorp.com)

[facebook.com/AGCOcorp](https://facebook.com/AGCOcorp) [twitter.com/AGCOcorp](https://twitter.com/AGCOcorp) [youtube.com/AGCOcorp](https://youtube.com/AGCOcorp)

As a Twin Cities' suburban resident the past 40 years, I still find myself interested in RURAL projects that affect our environment, our aesthetic enjoyment, and our general stewardship of our God-given land, air and water. The proposed ATV/OHM Park in the Sacred Heart Township near the MN River Valley is of SPECIAL interest to me as I grew up in the area and my memories of the beauty have never been erased.

When I first read the proposal, I found it perplexing, saddening, and incredulous. That the Renville County Commissioners would consider a site so small (272 acres) was a first area of concern. Then, I read that the DNR was not opposing the project and that there were thoughts that Legacy Funds might be appropriated for the project. Really? I thought this must be some wild fabrication. Not so! I kept reading several articles of support and opposition and it became a reality -- one that I thought I must weigh in on at this point in the negotiations.

Notwithstanding the small size of the site, there are so many other factors that make the project an outright INJUSTICE. After reading the first EAW Worksheet and Guidelines, I saw so many intangibles. I was reminded of the old quotation, "If ifs and buts were candy and nuts, every day would be Christmas." I will relate an example of the many I noted. Regarding trail construction, I read, "The goal with all these

different construction efforts is to minimize soil disturbance and follow the existing contours of the land to promote existing water shedding characteristics.” The frightening word in that premise, in addition to the deliberate absence of the words “IF” and “BUT” (“If” and “but” are big “little” words!) is the word “GOAL”!! Goals are frequently not realized. Consider the following:

IF the goal is met, or

BUT even if problems are minimized, how much damage or disturbance remains, or

What IF some or all of so many aspects are not seriously studied: soil stabilization, run-off, erosion, sedimentation, safety, noise pollution, water and air quality, and wildlife, to name just a few. I also found the following words (or phrases) to be misleading and they should be read and digested with caution and fear of the outcome: reduce, minimize, appears to, not anticipated, not likely, not identified, incompatible, and on and on.

It is also my understanding that the DNR is mandated (in trail identification locations) to have a set of criteria relating to suitability and possible negative impacts. I believe they recommend that ATV Trails be 15 to 30 miles from water bodies. Furthermore, it seems that a land-locked piece of land, such as the one under consideration, could be “ripe” for overuse and abuse. Overuse would be a safety hazard and abuse could lead to natural resource harm – add this to the other issues I have already cited.

In addition, there is also the EXPENSE of building and maintaining the project. Much of this will need be “swallowed” by taxpayers – a good number of whom oppose the wishes of the few. Sad to say, the FEW are those who are most in need of researching more of what they are wishing to build.

I stick by my word “INJUSTICE” – not only is there a lack of population support, but there is a lack of positive evidence -- and that makes the proposal problematic. It “smells” of ruination of property and resources and a complete lack of respect for the surrounding home dwellers. Where is the justice?

Please speak with Governor Dayton, the DNR, the Legacy Fund Committee, and more important, please re-consider some of the IFS and BUTS. It really is not Christmas every day!

Sincerely,

Beverly Ryan  
20576 Cypress Dr.  
Farmington, MN 55024

**From:** Molly Schweinfurter  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** MN River OHV comments  
**Date:** Tuesday, May 09, 2017 9:20:38 AM

To Who It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong concern against the proposed OHV park in Renville County. Area residents surrounding the park have already expressed to the county that they do not want this park, and I am beyond disappointed in county leadership for continuing to pursue this issue despite their input. What is more important than the voice of your citizens? Apparently the voice of those spending money... In my opinion, the beauty of the Minnesota River Valley is its serenity. I live about a mile from the Beaver Falls Park and years ago ATV riders desecrated it regularly. The noise at our home was horrendous and offensive, disturbing our enjoyment of being outdoors, and at times we could hear them riding with the doors and windows shut and tv on. This is not what we want in the Minnesota River Valley. The ATVs have been chased out of the park, but the extreme damage from the trails they made continues to this day. It's heartbreaking to see ruts deeper than I am tall continue to suffer from erosion. I do not want to hear this horrible noise anywhere in Renville County again. It goes against the very draw of the Minnesota River Valley. Shut down this project!

Molly Schweinfurter  
Beaver Falls, Renville County

**From:** Daniel Self  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** MN Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Saturday, April 22, 2017 7:38:44 AM

Riding opportunities in southern Minnesota are few. I look forward to seeing this.

**From:** Gloria Skalbeck  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** OHVRA  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 18, 2017 8:10:04 PM

To Everyone on the Environmental Rev.DNR

I keep hoping that all of you will begin to think of all the dangers involved in the ATV park that some of you think will be so good for Renville County.

Part of my property taxes are paid in Renville County and they are already sky high. We keep being subjected to higher taxes, and this ATV park that some are proposing is sure to bring a high cost to the taxpayers, along with the damage to our environment. When will someone start thinking about ALL of the people, rather than a select few??? I could site examples, but some sound 'silly', yet that's what I think this ATV park is. If it is not maintained 'PERFECTLY and there are injuries, the County is sure to be responsible. Nobody sues for \$10,000 any more. Five to ten million is more the norm. I (I) do not want to pay higher taxes for people getting injured doing something so senseless.

Some say it will bring money in to the communities. Do you know that when they have meetings in places that 'they charge for the use' of the facility, they expect the space free to them. How does that bring revenue to a community??

I cannot imagine that this is even something to be considered. Our water, wildlife, air, and all the great parts of our county, and our state, should be preserved.

Why are 'buffers' being considered ( to take care of our water) when the Minnesota River is not considered a valuable resource??

Please please think about this. My grandchildren want a great place to live-and we as adults can make it so.

Thank you.

Gloria Skalbeck  
Taxpayer in South Sacred Heart Township

Sent from my iPad

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**ST. PAUL DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS**  
**180 FIFTH STREET EAST, SUITE 700**  
**ST. PAUL, MN 55101-1678**

April 20, 2017

Regulatory File No. MVP-2016-03309-JTB

**THIS IS NOT A PERMIT**

Bill Johnson  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
Dear Mr. Johnson:

COMMENT x.A: We have received your submittal described below. You may contact the Project Manager with questions regarding the evaluation process. The Project Manager may request additional information necessary to evaluate your submittal. General

File Number: MVP-2016-03309-JTB

Applicant: Renville County

Project Name: Renville County / Minnesota Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area

Received Date: 04/10/2017

Project Manager: Justin Berndt  
651-290-5446  
Justin.T.Berndt@usace.army.mil

Additional information about the St. Paul District Regulatory Program, including the new Clean Water Rule, can be found on our web site at <http://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/missions/regulatory>.

Please note that initiating work in waters of the United States prior to receiving Department of the Army authorization could constitute a violation of Federal law. If you have any questions, please contact the Project Manager.

Thank you.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
St. Paul District  
Regulatory Branch

Comments on the EAW report on the Renville County OHVRA  
Proposed by Renville County.

Some comments and observation on the recently released EAW report.

According to the DNR document from the Division of Ecological and Water Resources, (Attachment 1 ) , the northeast section of the proposed site is listed as an "imperiled native plant community". They are going to put the" ATV class 1 and Single track trails" in this area?

According to the report, all vehicles must have Mn registration, breaks, muffler, noise emissions under 90 db, reflective material, etc, (state regulations). Who is going to enforce this?

In that same vein, a great number of rules and restrictions are being placed on the users of the proposed park. Time of use, type of vehicles, trespassing, proper trail use, safety equipment use, alcoholic beverage use, etc. but no indications as to who and how are they to be enforced. A volunteer group, working only on self-interest, and convenience, with no legal standing or power, is hardly a sufficient safeguard against abuse.

A great deal of hew and cry has been made about the "noise and dust" caused by the gravel trucks. Please keep in mind that there are three ways out of the Ponderosa pit (the most active); east and west on CR 15, and north on 200 Ave. and traffic will depend on the trucks destination. For weeks at a time, truck traffic on any one route could be nil.

I notice there isn't a buffer area around the property in the "notch" on the west side of the park. Why?

If mining pit reclamation is to be with *native* prairie grass, why are trails being put through them?

I fail to see where there is any benefit to Renville County in this park. Facilities that would be of greatest use by ATV users are all located in Redwood county, To use any of the distant facilities in Renville county, ATV's could not be used as it requires passing *over* federal highway 212, whereas Belview is accessible via county roads.

Renville taxpayers would be left carrying the cost of maintenance, as well as the loss of taxable assets.

I am a bit surprised that the EAV report has a somewhat cavalier attitude towards the area's wildlife. Anything currently in the area has already adjusted to the intermittent noise generated by mining and agriculture. The addition of the OHV park with its additional noise and dust has results in what appears to be a " gee, that's tough" attitude toward the loss of habitat for the native wildlife. Where is the displaced wildlife going to go?

Please keep in mind that currently, in most areas, if you go 50 feet from the roads or pits, the impact on the area by the mining is basically non existent. The loudest noise back there is from

birds, frogs and crickets. This OHV park will crisscross the entire area with bare, rut carved trails where even a skunk would fear to tread.

Will the 50 foot buffer area be applied to the native grassland, creek, and wetlands areas?

While most ORV operators are honest, law-abiding, considerate riders, the concern is with the "Cowboy" riders, who think that rules and signs don't apply to them. The damages done to the abandoned sand pit on the east side of the proposed park gives mute evidence to this. Riders apparently drove over the "No Trespassing" sign so they couldn't see it. Once again, what is going to prevent this?

Anyone who insists that riding OHV's don't cause erosion should look at what has happened in that pit! This park has the potential of turning the Minnesota River into something "to thin to plow, to thick to drink"!

The opinions and feelings of the area's local landowners have been noted, and promptly ignored .. We have been told that due to some unexplained technicality, a petition against the proposed park, signed by the vast majority of the area's residence has been ignored .. Asking county residents find that most are either against or vehemently against the proposed park.

To provide the park described in this EAV will require vast sums of money, both to build and to maintain. Proposing that the funds to buy and build this park will come out of ORV licensing fees, with no state or county participation seems to stretch credibility to transparency,. Funding Lastly, the entire northwest side of the park, if it is sold, will be sold without mineral rights. The owners of the gravel mine reserve the right to mine the entire area underneath the proposed park. All the carefully groomed trails and facilities could disappear into the back of a gravel truck.

Respectfully,

Richard and Judy Taylor  
19320 Co Rd. 15  
Sacred heart, MN 56285  
dzt1 O@ecenet.com

April 20, 2017

I am writing in response to the recently published EAW for the proposed OHV/ATV park for Sacred Heart Township in Renville County, MN. In light of the establishment of buffers along waterways and the renewed call for preservation of native grasses and wildlife habitat, it baffles me that anyone would consider this site for an ATV park.

My family has resided in this area for six generations and enjoyed the tranquility and beauty that the area has to offer. My forefathers settled the area because it reminded them of their native Norway with its hills, grasslands, and eagles soaring above the flowing river. The area is rich in history with the nearby Joseph R. Brown Memorial Park, and the proposed park would be located on both sides of the scenic Sioux Trail. Why would we consider eroding and degrading such a wonderful piece of property?

I would think that the EAW is completed with only the consideration of people following the designated trails and not disrupting the surrounding land. I have seen reports from other areas of northern Minnesota in which the adjacent lands are torn up and rutted from vehicles that stray from trails. I cannot conceive that this area would be any different. The location is too near the Minnesota River for them not to want to explore, thereby trespassing and gouging the existing routes that exist to the river. Muddy routes are not a deterrent, but rather an enticement, for them to go exploring. The adjacent landowners and residents have been largely ignored in this entire process. This proposed area is too small for riders of ATV's not to become bored going around in circles and wanting more adventure at the expense of local neighboring properties. And unlike parks such as the one located in Appleton, MN., there is no room for expansion.

Economic benefits to Renville County and the local towns of Sacred Heart and Renville have been voiced, but no evidence has ever been brought forward. Without nearby hotels and amenities, how is the area supposed to benefit? And what about the draw upon the local law enforcement and the distance to medical facilities should anyone become sick or injured? It is widely assumed from the opposition to this park that most of the economic benefits would be for nearby Redwood County, a county which has voted to not build such a park.

Too much time and money has already been spent on this proposal without analyzing the effect on the environment and local residents and potential (or lack of) benefits that would ensue. Too much of the prairie with its wildlife surrounding the gravel pit stands to be destroyed as well as the serenity of the river valley. I implore you to stop considering this site as suitable for such a park. Thank you.

Sincerely:

Janet Westby  
Landowner in South Sacred Heart Township  
[52westby@gmail.com](mailto:52westby@gmail.com)

April 26, 2017

MN Valley OHVRA, Renville County

EAW - Study bias and lack of EAW scientific support analysis for conclusions.

There has been a consistent lack of impartiality in the process used to justify securing this park. ISG Group civil engineer Andy Brandell, with an expertise in athletic turf systems, was hired to conduct the study for the proposed park.

The 3 individuals he hired to gather information on issues associated with developing an OHM/ATV park in this location were biased people, based on their professional jobs. When asked, not one of these people could honestly say they had ever provided a negative recommendation to an ATV park study. Their jobs are to sell parks. They all had a very direct interest in securing approval for the second study phase of this ATV park which would mean additional income from a second grant of \$60,000.00 plus.

Data these 3 people received through meetings with resident/landowners during the information gathering process was heard and recorded. But, nowhere in the next phases of the study were opponents concerns given any merit or standing. In fact, after we presented concerns in written or spoken word throughout the process, our comments were immediately disregarded. They allowed us to speak because we had a right to based on the public process. After that, we were ignored.

At an evening meeting for all parties in November, 2014, following 3 days of initial feasibility information gathering with both sides, Karen Umphress and Ron Potter delivered a slide presentation to the full group which explained park design and activities which would take place in a new park. All the information they heard from objecting neighbors previously was already set aside that very night, before they even analyzed the gathered information (3 days worth).

Then, in December 2014, the Stakeholder Taskforce group was formed. A requirement for this Taskforce in the coming months was that no dissenting opinions could be voiced. So, even if an issue being discussed by the group was troubling, nothing could be brought forward to amend its status. Moving forward was the only option. This is how the first \$60,000.00 was spent. This was the point in hiring Andy Brandell, to shut down the opposition and still make it look like they were represented in the process.

The now completed EAW is required to address all issues because it is a "fill-in-the-blank", often generic format with phrasing acquired from previous EAW language. But, this EAW quickly falls into the same above described pattern of ignoring the seriousness of long-lasting OHM/ATV activity to the existing natural resource. The EAW allows the possibility that ATV activity may negatively affect wildlife populations, wildlife habitat, native prairie, and contribute to physical landscape degradation. But, each item is tossed aside without thorough explanation and with only a standard response of "a minimal negative effect" because mining already exists. The mining exists in certain specific places, not throughout the total acreage. OHM/ATV activity is a totally different intrusion into this environment.

A continuing lack of consideration for the following also shows up in the EAW.

1. There is no park supervision to control negative activity.

2. There is no mention of handling trespassing issues. This park's south border is 1/4 mile from the Minnesota River. The temptation will be to get to the river. This small park, by its design will quickly become boring with little scenic variation. The landscape below the county road is flat prairie grasses. The dead NE gravel pit will be active, but, only for a select group. Its trails rise and fall, but, the trails are tight between trees. It is not for sight-seeing riders. The NW acreage again is flat prairie grasses above a slope of trees. Most recreational users over time want a broader and more expansive experience than this proposed park offers. The park is not a long-term answer as a recreational destination.

3. The park design includes trails totaling 19 miles. The trails are going to be informally created by mowing or knocking down paths. The zig-zag design of the trails in each area go "back and forth" about 100' apart until you get to the other side. So, as an example, to drive 3 miles, you may have driven over the same half mile 4 or 5 times. Riders are not going anywhere. This is not what recreational users are looking for in a park.

4. The EAW has no plan for users to respect the parks outer borders. There are certain natural areas which will discourage crossing, but, there are many areas of border where it is difficult to distinguish what is park and what is private ownership. Renville County has a history of ATV users driving in its parks and destroying the natural resource. State parks in northern MN on thousands of acres have a history of ATV users driving off-road and destroying the natural resource.

5. The EAW speaks to the negative affects on wildlife and wildlife habitat, but, basically ignores any action, other than setting aside 17 acres of native prairie. Again, without supervision, how do you keep the trespassers out? The EAW just moves forward with the park, with little regard to the natural resource. Any nesting and hatched bird activity will be dramatically affected by OHM/ATV activity. There is an inverse correlation between the number of wildlife in an area and the number of vehicles with their noise and the proximity of activity. The negative results cannot be ignored.

6. The EAW does not mention true, historical costs to having an OHM/ATV park. There is the need for law enforcement. There are nuisance and trespass costs. There are costs related to undesirable activity. Environmental degradation caused by human/ATV activity will occur to the physical landscape. A costly environmental damage also occurs in the reduction of the wildlife population and also the wildlife habitat, where OHM/ATV activity drives out the existing natural resource. Renville County has historically shown itself to have a difficult time with physically maintaining its existing county parks in a timely manner when damage occurs. Adding one more certainly won't make the situation better.

7. No study has been explored to prove that this park will be economically beneficial to the surrounding community. ATV supporters and government spokespersons talk in broad, general terms about economic benefit. But, it is Renville County residents who will bear the direct and specific burden of paying this park's future costs and expenses through their tax dollars. The physical assistance of a local ATV club is not the answer.

Sincerely,  
Norman Westby  
47nwestby@gmail.com

**From:** [David Westin](#)  
**To:** [MN\\_Review, Environmental \(DNR\)](#)  
**Subject:** Mn Valley OHVRA  
**Date:** Wednesday, May 10, 2017 12:24:46 PM

Hello,

Just a quick note to say that I would really like to see the Minnesota Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area project move forward, and that after reviewing the EAW, I still feel the same way.

Thank you,

David Westin

May 1 2017

MN Valley OHVRA, Renville County

EAW Public Response

Gov. Mark Dayton, DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr, Bill Johnson Planning Director

Gentlemen : My name is Dave Zaske and my wife and I built a new home in 2009 on my family farm ¼ mile down wind and downhill from the proposed site. We along with 111 other neighbors and surrounding land owners signed a petition opposing the site of this project in 2013.

The opening line of Minnesota DNR's mission statement reads "Our mission is to work with citizens to conserve and manage the states' natural resources..." In an era of Pheasant Summits, Water Summits, and buffer strips and I can't believe the DNR is promoting the destruction of native habitat under the fantasy of perceived economic benefit. Parts of the proposed site are currently or were formally enrolled in RIM and CRP. To destroy these parcels with ATV trails can simply not be allowed. The "Zimmerman" property is no longer mined and is returning to natural grassland and forestland. Our fields surrounding the park are cropland and CRP with food plots. We essentially feed the wildlife and they shelter in the proposed park area.

The topography declines 142 feet with the Minnesota River ¼ mile downhill. To replace native vegetation with ATV trails on land with slopes in excess of 50% and not expect extreme runoff is inaccurate. A native mussel bed in the nearby river would certainly suffer from excess sediment. 2 streams flow through the proposed site and would carry runoff directly to the river.

Noise and dust control would theoretically be controlled by natural vegetation. We planted a row of native red cedar with a weed barrier on our property in 1996. These trees are now 5-8 feet tall. Building a "barrier" wall of native vegetation to shelter us would take 40 years to grow large enough to accomplish anything. Current ATVs may have noise limiting devices. Our concern is, the majority of older units which are void of such devices when combined with multiple users creates a large, loud noise problem. Exhaust pollutants from ATVs would drift directly to our home, another negative.

Renville County Road 15 dissects the proposed site. It's part of the "Scenic Byway". There's nothing scenic about dust, a dirt race track and mud running down hillsides. The motoring public currently enjoys a scenic drive through the river valley. This valley is the BWCA of southern Minnesota and should not be considered for an ATV park as it would never be proposed in the BWCA.

The Minnesota Valley ATV Riders club website shows the group destroying a cattail slough with ATV's. This group wants to tap the Environmental Trust Fund and the Legacy Amendment funds to pay for its playground. We all voted for these funds to "protect, enhance, and restore wetlands, prairies, forests, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat..." The thought of using these funds to destroy critical habitat is plain and simply wrong.

Instead of hiring ISG, a group which designs ATV parks for profit; where is the input from our DNR's Game and Fish Departments? The EAW lists the threatened and endangered species which would be negatively impacts by this proposal. Not to be forgotten are the pheasants, turkeys, deer etc. that call this place home. ISG told me wildlife wouldn't be affected. How can you dissect a field of CRP with dirt ATV trails and not destroy their nesting grounds. Where is the science here?

Does anyone realize the Baalson family lives in an area which would be surrounded on 3 sides by an ATV park? This is their home! Can you imagine working all day, then coming home and listening to dirt bikes.

Attachment 1 of the EAW states Biological Survey and Prairie Core concerns. Namely “accelerating prairie conservation in the state.” There are obviously better places for an ATV park for the local club to use and the taxpayers of Minnesota to pay for. Remember the DNR’s mission statement “to conserve and manage the states’ natural resources..”. It’s time for the DNR to do the right thing and put an end to this proposal, not “Do Nothing Right”.

Sincerely

Dave Zaske

[dzaske@yahoo.com](mailto:dzaske@yahoo.com)

20750 County Road 15

Renville MN 56284

320-212-9599

**From:** Marsha Zimmerman  
**To:** MN\_Review, Environmental (DNR)  
**Subject:** "Mn Valley OHVRA"  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 26, 2017 7:07:09 PM

Sent from my iPad

Being rural residents, next to the Minnesota River bottom, has always been appreciated by us. We've been bow hunters, all our lives, and have had many opportunities, over the years, to enjoy the great nature and animals that reside there. Many a surprise, as we have sat, in our stands, in the quiet of it all. We have enjoyed many drives through it, seeing beautiful deer, fox, pheasant, and many other animals.

Please do not put a ATV race track anywhere near it. Would so ruin the beauty of it all.  
That's all people can think of to do for fun, is destroy nature? Go out and do something constructive!  
Please do not let this pass. The problems it will create, will be much bigger than you can even foresee. Please vote no.

Gordon Blomeke, Marsha Zimmermann. Box 27  
Belview, Minnesota 56214

**From:** [adam zondervan](#)  
**To:** [MN\\_Review, Environmental \(DNR\)](#)  
**Subject:** Renville OHV park  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 11, 2017 2:47:05 PM

I would love to see this happen here so close to home, instead of going to Appletons OHV, I have a bunch of friends that really look forward to using it when it's built! I own a house in renville and want this park built not just for me, but also to bring my son to, give us something to do that is local for the summer.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)