

Motorized Trail Task Force Report

To

The Minnesota State Legislature

And

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

January 14, 2003

The Task Force Members

Barry Babcock - Hackensack, MN
Jerry Bahls - Fridley, MN
Tom Baumann - DNR Forestry
Rachel Benishek - Duluth, MN
Lois Campbell - Rice, MN
Greg Damlo - Park Rapids, MN
Steve DeMuth - Brooklyn Park, MN
Ken Fastner - Inver Grove Heights, MN
Dave Hendricks - Lakeville, MN
John Hunt - Big Lake, MN
Jamie Juenemann - Duluth, MN
Dave Kryzer - Brooklyn Park, MN
Tom Martinson - Two Harbors,
MN Robert Milne - Bemidji, MN
Greg Murray - St. Cloud, MN (Co-Chair)
Judy Ness - Superior National Forest
Matt Norton - St. Paul, MN
Ron Solberg - Thief River Falls, MN
Tom Spence - Schroeder, MN (Co-Chair)
Darrell Spencer - Duluth, MN
Cindy Wheeler – DNR Trails and Waterways

Table of Contents

The Task Force Members	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Introduction.....	1
The Issues.....	2
Motorized Trail Task Force Mandate	3
The Task Force Process	5
Task Force Recommendations.....	6
Appendix A.....	A-1
Appendix B.....	B-1
Appendix C.....	C-1

Introduction

The 2002 Minnesota Legislature passed a law requiring the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Commissioner to appoint a Motorized Trail Task Force (“Task Force”) to review and make recommendations to the 2003 Legislature addressing eight topics relating to motorized trails for Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs) on state forest lands (see Figure 1 on page 4, excerpted from 2002 Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 351, section 33). In June 2002, DNR Commissioner Allen Garber appointed twenty-two citizens to the Task Force to “...represent a balanced mixture of backgrounds, interests and perspectives on the challenges surrounding off-highway vehicle use on state forest lands.” One member of the Task Force left for personal reasons; the remaining twenty-one members remained active participants throughout the process. Following statutory direction, the Commissioner appointed “... representatives of off-highway vehicle users, non-motorized forest interests, non-state forest land managers, the department of natural resources, and other appropriate parties.” Commissioner Garber also encouraged the Task Force to “engage in spirited, analytical and constructive discussions.”

With the assistance of DNR staff, meetings were held twice a month around the state from late June through December to prepare this report. The Task Force met in Grand Rapids, Duluth, Brainerd, St. Paul, Bemidji, St. Cloud and Arden Hills. Information was gathered from many sources including the DNR Divisions of Fisheries, Ecological Services, Wildlife, Forestry, and Trails and Waterways, the Office of Budget and Management Services, and Regional Operations. Presentations were also made by trail construction experts, motorized users and non-motorized users of the state forests. A total of 28 different speakers presented information to the Task Force relevant to the topics of discussion. In November the Task Force began to discuss and vote on the specific Task Force Recommendations to be submitted to the Minnesota Legislature.

At the conclusion of these meetings, this report was drafted and approved by all members of the Task Force. The Task Force requests that the Minnesota Legislature pass appropriate legislation relating to motorized trails on state forest lands that reflects the recommendations in this report.

The Task Force thanks the DNR and especially the DNR Task Force Support Team of Brian Stenquist, Jason Moeckel and Michelle Beeman for their assistance and support during this difficult process.

The Issues

The Motorized Trail Task Force spent much of its time engaging in presentations and discussions about the issues related to the use of motorized vehicles on Minnesota's state forest land. These issues revolve around the use of OHVs, which include All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), Off-Highway Motorcycles (OHMs) and Off-Road Trucks (ORVs). In order to provide the legislature with a comprehensive, practical approach for the future, it was imperative that all 21 members understand these OHV issues.

The issues revolve around use conflicts and the potential environmental impacts. These include, but are not limited to: (1) motorized users and non-motorized users, (2) motorized users and environmental issues, and (3) Department of Natural Resources and stakeholders.

The dramatic increase in OHV users and the ability of the DNR to adequately implement trail system plans have intensified the issues of repairing and maintaining trails, reviewing locations of trails that have been damaged by improper use, and identifying and closing inappropriate trails. The Task Force also recognizes that any new trails that are to be developed must meet the requirements of the user groups, while still maintaining trail stability and environmental integrity.

With such a wide variety of perspectives represented by the members of the Task Force, it was difficult to agree on the relative importance of the more specific issues, but the list includes:

- Education of motorized users, non-motorized users and the general public
- Non-motorized considerations
- Environmental review and impacts
- DNR internal review and implementation process
- Natural resource protection concerns
- Current and future funding sources
- Effective Enforcement
- Designated trails
- Need for multiple use

State forests are public lands mandated through law to be available for use by all citizens in the State of Minnesota. This does not mean that the forests need to provide for every use in every location. Determining the appropriate balance of trails, protecting the environment, educating the public, enforcing the rules and laws, and providing funding are the main issues that this report will attempt to address.

Motorized Trail Task Force Mandate

The debate over OHV use on state forest lands to date has been broad and far ranging. In an effort to focus debate and discussion of the topic, the legislation (Figure 1) was clear in requiring the Task Force to review, advise, and provide recommendations on use and management of OHVs on state forest lands. The legislation also identified seven specific topics for the Task Force to examine, and gave the Task Force the authority to examine additional topics as they felt necessary.

The seven specific topics for examination and recommendation included:

- the overall quantity and distribution of motorized trails on state forest lands and a timeframe for trail development;
- a process for trail planning and trail project development including assessment of opportunities for public notification and involvement;
- current monitoring, maintenance, and enforcement activities on motorized trails and plans for future management;
- current forest recreation rules and need for modifications;
- financial resources necessary for current and future all-terrain vehicle trail development, management, and enforcement of trail regulations;
- recreational interests of non-motorized forest users impacted by all-terrain vehicle trail use; and
- natural resource protection concerns regarding all-terrain vehicle trail use including, but not limited to, soil erosion and noise impacts.

The Task Force was required to submit this report with its recommendations to the 2003 Legislature by January 15, 2003.

Figure 1 Legislation Authorizing the Motorized Trail Task Force.

2002 Laws of Minnesota
Chapter No. 351
S.F. No 2674

Sec. 33. [MOTORIZED TRAIL TASK FORCE; STATE FOREST LANDS.]

(a) The commissioner of natural resources shall establish a motorized trail task force to review, advise, and provide recommendations on use and management of off-highway vehicles on state forest lands. The task force shall consist of representatives of off-highway vehicle users, nonmotorized forest interests, nonstate forest land managers, the department of natural resources, and other appropriate parties.

(b) The task force shall review and make recommendations on the following:

(1) the overall quantity and distribution of motorized trails on state forest lands and a time frame for trail development;

(2) a process for trail planning and trail project development including assessment of opportunities for public notification and involvement;

(3) current monitoring, maintenance, and enforcement activities on motorized trails and plans for future management;

(4) current forest recreation rules and need for modifications;

(5) financial resources necessary for current and future all-terrain vehicle trail development, management, and enforcement of trail regulations;

(6) recreational interests of nonmotorized forest users impacted by all-terrain vehicle trail use;

(7) natural resource protection concerns regarding all-terrain vehicle trail use including, but not limited to, soil erosion and noise impacts; and

(8) other issues relating to motorized trails, as determined by the task force.

(c) Task force members may be reimbursed as provided in Minnesota Statutes, section 15.059, subdivision 6.

(d) The task force shall report its recommendations by January 15, 2003, to the commissioner and the senate and house of representatives policy and finance committees with jurisdiction over natural resources.

Presented to the governor April 25, 2002

Signed by the governor April 29, 2002, 1:25 p.m.

The Task Force Process

The Task Force used the following process to arrive at its final report to the legislature:

- Engaged in constructive, thorough discussions;
- Received informative and relevant presentations;
- Received access to important and insightful information before, during and after meetings;
- Task Force members helped identify and prioritize speakers and presenters that were valuable for the discussion topics;
- Engaged in open, transparent proceedings, which included having all meetings open to the public and the media. During each meeting, the Task Force allowed any interested audience member a brief opportunity to share their thoughts, ideas or concerns with the members. Email comments from the public were also shared with the members.
- A group record of the topics discussed and decisions made was created and agreed to at each meeting. The group record and presentation materials were made available to the public on the DNR's Internet site.
- Meetings were well managed, begun and ended on time, and effectively used two co-chairs, a meeting facilitator, and Task Force support team.
- Meetings were well attended by the members. No substitutes/alternates on the Task Force were allowed. If a Task Force member missed a meeting they were caught up on information by Task Force staff or other members.
- Decisions about recommendations were based on unanimous informed consent, wherein individual members were completely informed, could openly disagree and could offer alternative perspectives. Members gave their informed consent on items with which they may not have been in total agreement, but were willing to let move forward. Members could also withhold their consent, which was noted in the meeting notes. Proposed recommendations that did not receive unanimous informed consent did not become recommendations of the Task Force, but are listed for reference in the appendices.
- Task Force members offered for discussion, ideas that were common, complementary, and even contradictory. Each member first presented the ideas that they thought would receive informed consent. Proposed recommendations were considered in a series of rounds, with each member presenting one recommendation per round that they felt was most likely to gain the group's consent. Each proposed recommendation was voted upon and given informed consent (if all the members voted "green" on it) or was tabled (if it ultimately received a "red" vote.) The group worked through as many ideas as possible, reaching unanimous informed consent on 31 recommendations, and discussing and voting on an additional 24 ideas that did not reach unanimous informed consent. See Appendix A.

Task Force Recommendations

The Task Force recognizes that a number of the following recommendations could be listed under several of the legislative topic areas below. The Task Force assigned the recommendations to the category that appears to be the primary focus of the recommendation.

Recommendations that received unanimous informed consent and focused on topic area (1) the overall quantity and distribution of motorized trails on state forest lands and a time frame for trail development:

- 1.1 All existing roads in state forests should be inventoried and categorized. All roads should be mapped and made available to the public.
- 1.2 Improve the existing inventory and mapping of all state forest access routes (forest trails, informal ATV trails, utility corridors).
- 1.3 DNR shall create an inventory of all roads and trails located in state forests by Oct. 1, 2004.
- 1.4 Emphasize quality of trails, not quantity of trails.

Recommendations that received unanimous informed consent and focused on topic area (2) a process for trail planning and trail project development including assessment of opportunities for public notification and involvement:

- 2.1 Upon completion of trail Best Management Practices (BMP) Guidelines, the guidelines should be sent to third parties not involved in the drafting for peer review.
- 2.2 DNR should develop and implement explicit design standards that protect natural resources from trail impacts. These include the BMP Guidelines (also known as the Technical Reference Guide), which are currently being developed by Troy Scott Parker.
- 2.3 Trail systems that are developed should provide a wide range of opportunities consistent with environmental laws.
- 2.4 Where appropriate and allowable, use existing trail tread and encourage multiple use (e.g. equestrian and ATV).
- 2.5 Use existing trail corridors for new trail uses whenever possible.
- 2.6 The DNR Trails and Waterways Division will work with the appropriate local units of government, local trail users and other interested residents on proposed OHV projects. They will inform these groups of the positive and negative impacts of increased use and state-wide promotion on local traditional uses and local resources.

- 2.7 Utilize the information contained in the original DNR OHV Area System Plans as a tool to help identify existing trail areas for potential designation.

Recommendations that received unanimous informed consent and focused on topic area (3) current monitoring, maintenance, and enforcement activities on motorized trails and plans for future management:

- 3.1 Establish a comprehensive long-term and random monitoring system of trails (including but not limited to maintenance needs and environmental effects).
- 3.2 License plates for OHVs should be clear, legible, uniform, and issued by the State.
- 3.3 Operator training and education should be coordinated between state, local and private entities in order to develop mutually acceptable training/licensing requirements.
- 3.4 Accept Specialty Vehicle Institute of America (SVIA) certificate of training as proof of operator training if approved by DNR for purposes of riding on public land.
- 3.5 A larger investment of resources must be made in enforcement and education. Enforcement will be carried out by conservation officers, DNR Natural Resource Officers (NROs) and by local law enforcement as appropriate.
- 3.6 Real efforts should be made to improve signage and maps in an effort to make it clear to the users and enforcement what is allowed and what is prohibited.
- 3.7 Sustain the full complement of conservation officers.
- 3.8 Equip all Conservation Officer vehicles with computers, as the State Patrol has done, and require enforcement actions to be entered in nightly/weekly updates. Not intended to come from OHV funds.

Recommendations that received unanimous informed consent and focused on topic area (4) current forest recreation rules and need for modifications:

- 4.1 An OHV shall not be washed on a public water access ramp.
- 4.2 Establish closer ties and formal working agreements with county and federal public landowners to foster consistent application of RMV rules, regulations and enforcement efforts in areas of intermingled land ownership. Explore the use of various administrative mechanisms to formalize this relationship.
- 4.3 A person who operates an OHV on public lands or frozen waters must possess a valid OHV operators permit showing successful completion of an approved OHV educational course. The course should be designed to educate the operators on rules and regulations

related to the responsible operation of OHVs on public lands and frozen waters. The course will include information on state laws, environmental impacts related to trail riding behavior and responsible operation. Lifetime permit designed to eliminate ignorance excuse for enforcement purposes. Required to have a license with them to operate. The Task Force recommends a grandfather clause be included.

Recommendations that received unanimous informed consent and focused on topic area (5) financial resources necessary for current and future all-terrain vehicle trail development, management, and enforcement of trail regulations:

- 5.1 Provide adequate funding for the monitoring of state trails.
- 5.2 Provide reasonable funding for county sheriffs targeted for OHV enforcement.

Recommendations that received unanimous informed consent and focused on topic area (6) recreational interests of non-motorized forest users impacted by all-terrain vehicle trail use:

- 6.1 Trails based on usage, make-up, and length should be open to other users such as horse and mountain bike riders if possible. Multi-use trails should be marked and rules established so each user knows their responsibility when approached by the other user.
- 6.2 Certain areas of state forests should be set aside as non-motorized recreation. These areas should be clearly designated and indicated on forest maps.

Recommendations that received unanimous informed consent and focused on topic area (7) natural resource protection concerns regarding all-terrain vehicle trail use including, but not limited to, soil erosions and noise impacts:

The Task Force did not assign any recommendations specifically to this topic area.

Recommendations that received unanimous informed consent and focused on topic area (8) other issues relating to motorized trails, as determined by the Task Force

- 8.1 Improve existing 1-800 line to provide relevant information on trail openings and closures, etc..
- 8.2 Establish a balanced statewide advisory committee to make future recommendations to the DNR and state legislature on OHV use in MN.
- 8.3 The legislature should limit the liability of private landowners who wish to provide riding opportunities to the public.

8.4 A comprehensive education program should include safety and Minnesota OHV and environmental law coursework. Could be taken through dealers or other providers when program meets basic criteria (SVIA, etc.)

8.5 Develop a comprehensive education program to teach the public and officials about rules, environment, and trail use etiquette.

Appendix A

Table A1. This appendix contains the ideas that were discussed and voted on, but did not receive unanimous informed consent. The ideas are organized in this appendix by the number of votes for informed consent they received. The ID numbers (in the left column) were assigned by the Task Force to keep track of the ideas as they were offered. We have retained the numbers here to ensure fidelity to the process. In some cases not all task force members were present for voting, therefore not all vote counts will total 21.

ID	Idea	Not Informed Consent	Informed Consent
45	Develop a system of distributing ridership throughout the state forest system as a means of protecting natural resources and meeting appropriate recreational expectations	1	20
32	The state shall establish additional OHV recreational areas on suitable land acquired for that purpose, with an emphasis on technical challenge, special events, safety training and practice riding, and recreational riding.	1	20
21	DNR shall establish a 1-800 # for people to call with reports of damage, conflict, or violations relating to OHV's.	1	20
18	Enforcement required by local agencies needs to be funded by state.	1	20
120	In the context of OHV planning, implementation, and enforcement; the DNR should balance concerns for the environment, the economy, and the community within in the context of sustainable resource management.	1	17
48	Wildlife, eco-services, fisheries, forestry, & T&W must have an equal opportunity to be involved in all future OHV trail planning	2	19
53	Develop trails that include access to local communities (gas, lodging, dining, ...)	2	19
8	OHV Rules Decal affixed to every machine along the lines of the recommendation found in the Division of Enforcement submission to the TASK FORCE.	3	18
2	Utilize the original DNR System Plan and other pertinent information to help identify needs for new and expansion of old or unused trails	4	17

ID	Idea	Not Informed Consent	Informed Consent
33	The primary focus of all OHV Planning, implementation and enforcement activities should be the protection of natural resources, but not to the exclusion of social and economic interests.	4	17
15	Extreme traction tires prohibited on state trails and state forests	4	17
44	Complete and audit (full accounting) of real, total costs of providing motorized recreation on public lands, including planning, repair, maintenance and enforcement.	4	17
58	Immediately decide and sign current trails and evaluate needs, modifications, or expansion of trail systems after 2 years of an enforced signed -use trail system within the state.	4	16
121	A well-designed system of appropriate trails should be brought on line as soon as possible to help protect natural resources. Delays in the designation, signing, and mapping of trails results in OHV traffic in undesirable areas.	4	14
74	Set priorities for the use of funds from the OHV accounts among several categories to include but not be limited to the following: maintenance of trails, design and development of trails, repair of environmental damage that is directly attributable to OHV use, enforcement.	5	13
24	In the absence of OHV group sponsored repairs, allow funds from the OHV dedicated accounts to be used to repair OHV damaged non-motorized trails. DNR T&W field staff should confirm OHV damage, make cost of repair recommendations, and oversee fund transfer.	6	15
115	DNR should provide a system of environmentally sustainable, designated RMV trails so that persons of multiple skill levels and abilities have access to suitable riding opportunities (as exists with cross country ski trails). DNR will not necessarily meet all skill level expectations on state forest lands. DNR should not provide challenge areas in State Forests.	6	12
63	Simplify the state forest classification system to two: Open, forest has trails open to OHV use, and Closed, forest has no trails open to OHV use. In Open forests, all existing trails will be posted as follows: Currently	7	11

ID	Idea	Not Informed Consent	Informed Consent
	<p>designated trails will be posted as "encouraged", currently undesignated trails will be posted as "provisional", unless experiencing substantial environmental damage, which will be posted "closed".</p> <p>During a three period, all traditional use trails will be receive an environmental evaluation, and a determination will be made to either: 1) designate the trail for OHV use, 2) close or reroute portions of the trail, and then designate, or, 3) close the trail to OHV use.</p> <p>Provide adequate funding for signing on both state and county forest lands. Provide funding for and accelerate the environmental evaluation process.</p>		
14	Citizen "oversight" committees composed of township government officials or township appointees (or substitute if townships don't exist) to oversee all OHV trail activity in state forests in which specific townships overlap	11	10
60	Extend big game language and exemptions to include additional big game hunting seasons. (Bear, Moose, etc...)	14	7
42	Require 1/2 mile buffer zone prohibiting RMV trail development near sensitive land use areas, including: National Parks, National Wilderness Areas, State Parks, Wildlife Refuges, Scientific and Natural Areas, Non-motorized trails and areas.	14	7
38	A "three strikes" policy for flagrant, egregious RMV violations. After the third violation, the machine will be confiscated.	15	6
27	Maintain status quo for current forest classifications.	17	4
9	Develop 2, 000 miles of OHV trails by 200_ .	20	1

Appendix B

Table B1. This appendix contains the ideas that were offered by Task Force members, but were not discussed by the Task Force as a whole due to time constraints. The ID numbers (in the left column) were assigned by the Task Force to keep track of the ideas as they were offered. We have retained the numbers here to ensure fidelity to the process.

ID	Idea
3	Recommend that DNR proceed with area OHV System Plans
17	Provide for 10 Natural Resource enforcement officers for the purpose of OHV enforcement statewide
96	Any future changes in the classification of State Forests should require a County Board resolution in support of the proposed classification from those affected counties, which have substantial land holdings.
5	Continue with current and area system plan process.
51	OHV planning and development program objectives should have as its first and primary, though not exclusive, objective "the protection and maintenance of ecosystem health" (See T. Browning August 20 presentation, slide #5, item #3) Comment: Tim Browning's presentation on August 20 indicated that while this was one of three objectives it had no greater weight than the other two considerations. I feel it should be the first objective and carry greater weight than either of the other two. While this may seem controversial at first blush, I do not think it should be controversial. It seems to me that all interested parties would agree that protection and maintenance of the ecosystem should be an overriding priority, so long as it is not to the exclusion of the other two considerations i.e. quality off road riding opportunities and managing competing resources.
69	All future trails should be designed and developed away from any and all highly erosive soils and wetlands.
67	Incorporate flexibility in the funding sources/policy to allow RMV monies to be spent on repair of damage, planning and construction on all public lands. Similar to the GIA program but this would transfer money directly from the State to the other public agency through some sort of partnership, for project specific work.
95	Develop grant program from OHV dedicated accounts, increase in license fees, or some other form of funding (from OHV users) that will provide for repair of any verifiable OHV damage. This will include, but not be limited to: state, county, township, private rights-of-way (and the roads and driveways contained within), trails and roads on state and county land, grant-in-aid trail systems, and any verifiable off-trail OHV damage. The DNR T&W field staff will confirm OHV damage, make cost of repair recommendations, and oversee the

ID	Idea
	grant program.
62	The legislature should set motorized recreation fees as appropriate to cover the full costs of: repairing OHV-caused damage to natural resources and non-motorized trails; enforcing pertinent laws relating to OHV use; maintaining or decommissioning existing trails; and planning, reviewing, and constructing trail improvements and additions.
61	All trails that are designated for motorized use should be maintained using funds from OHV accounts. This includes road ditches.
30	Fund the DNR Division of Forestry to repair the damage caused by OHV's
108	All registered owners of motorized recreation should have in their possession updated copy of rules and regulations free of charge, as well as some sort of trail maps for the area they are riding. A 1st Aid-Kit and personal trash bag must also be in possession while operating a motorized recreation vehicle. All items must be in the possession of person when riding motorized recreation. Reasoning: All acceptable items.
64	Eliminate the ATV cross-country travel exemption for hunting and trapping except for hunters that have disabled hunting privileges
35	Create a better model for trail proposal preparation for environmental review
73	Establish a formula for funding the repair of some of the environmental damage caused by motorized vehicles in State Forests and on public lands that includes taking a portion of the repair dollars from the three OHV dedicated funds. The formula should be proportional and not threaten depletion of any of the three funds.
65	Review the Grant in Aid program to increase management of the trail systems by the State. Presently the State provides funding for maintenance and other tangle items but involvement in the management, i.e., resolving user conflicts, planning, or correcting problems, for example, is left to the “partner”. It is unrealistic to expect all partners to have the same resources and skill as the State.
72	Set up a reserve fund by using revenues from a small license fee increase. The revenues would be dedicated to trail repair in areas where serve damage is identified. Funds would only be used when specified repair budgets are exhausted. A fee schedule would be set for future increases.
71	Expand the number of “Limited” forests. Identify high use areas and areas with considerable damages as those forests need immediate implementation. Designate all trails with proper signage at crossing points and line the trails with periodic markers similar to those used with

ID	Idea
	snowmobile trails.
116	All RMV trail proposals must go through a thorough; objective environmental and public review process that includes site assessment and comments by field staff from Ecological Services, Fisheries, Wildlife and Forestry. In addition, each individual RMV trail proposal that will ultimately connect users to other adjoining trail systems must also address the impacts of such interconnected use. Prior to release for public review, each RMV trail proposal must include the signatures of area and regional supervisors from each of the DNR Divisions listed above.
12	Defer all motorized trail construction until Troy Scott Parker document is finalized and adopted by the Department.
75	Ban right of way use of ATVs, unless that right of way is part of a designated trail.
86	Trail planning, implementation, and enforcement activities should balance social, environmental, and economic concepts and concerns, with none of the three areas given precedence over the other two.
110	Financial management of funds based on usage and monitoring of motorized trails. (Money where money is needed and utilized.)
52	ATV trails should have a hardened, crowned surface and run at, or above ground level.
78	Operation of Off-Highway Vehicles shall be only on designated trails on state lands.
117	Eliminate the "managed" forest classification and re-evaluate forests classified as "limited" based on the outcome of reviews conducted as outlined above.
93	Authorize a Legislative audit for Enforcement.
31	Change the status of signing from the current concepts found in the limited and managed forest. The new and universal signing for motorized usage would be "encourage, allow, prohibit". Comment: the current method of delineating trails is confusing at best. It is not reasonable to expect the average user to understand and abide by the difference in signing in managed and limited forest. The new method would be universal in all state owned lands as to motorized vehicles and eventually, perhaps for all users.
90	Streamline Environmental Review Process. Require Environmental Assessment Worksheets for all trail users including all DNR projects, State Parks, WMA's, Forestry, Wildlife, etc.

ID	Idea
49	<p>Allow Conservation Officers the authority to suspend or revoke the operators OHV permit. Any person convicted of 2nd violation would lose the permit for 90 days. The operator would then retake their OHV operator course. Any person who is convicted of an aggravated violation of the states OHV laws shall surrender all registration cards issued to them. Aggravated violations: Operating on public land under suspension or revocation, 5 violations within a 4-year period related to OHV usage.</p>
76	<p>That the current definition of Off Highway Vehicles/OHV's (ATV's, 4X4 Trucks, & Dirt Bike Motorcycles) as currently defined by the MN DNR shall not now or in the future be expanded to included any new recreational motorized vehicles (such as amphibious vehicles, hovercraft, etc.)</p>
23	<p>There should be reasonable amounts of time to implement trail systems. 1. For trails in place that need signage and maps (6-12 months); 2. Improving trails (6 months); 3. For alternative re-routes (24-30 months); 4. Planning and local government involvement (12-24 months)</p>
82	<p>The DNR will establish a wetland bank for Trails and Waterways and Grant-In-Aid projects to make sure that there is no net loss of wetlands and that wetlands used to mitigate wetland loss in trail development are appropriate replacements.</p>
36	<p>Establish a wetland bank or acceptable wetland enhancement projects for state and GIA trail development. Author withdrew this recommendation in lieu of a revised version submitted in round D.</p>
26	<p>Put equal emphasis on development/designation of ATV, OHM, and ORV trails.</p>
40	<p>Adopt formal review process within DNR that includes all divisions wishing to change or cancel project must have research information or be willing to conduct research from their budgets to address the issue.</p>

Appendix C

Some of the Task Force members decided to offer a personal message about the task force process, the content of the report, and the future. These messages are arranged in alphabetical order on the following pages.

Personal message by Barry W. Babcock

Editorial Comments

Process: In retrospect, the agreed upon “informed consent” process worked against those of us wishing to see more natural resource protection and stronger enforcement recommendations.

With current state and DNR regulations falling far short of protecting natural resources and establishing enforcement, OHV proponents on the Task Force were in a position to defeat any recommendations for resource protection and increased enforcement by casting one red vote. This in effect allowed obstructionist behavior and gave OHV proponents leverage in maintaining the status quo.

Content: Assumedly a primary reason the Task Force was initiated was due to the high degree of environmental damage to state lands. When I look for recommendations that received “informed consent” for natural resource protection, where are they? We spent over six months to arrive at only one resource protection recommendation: “An OHV shall not be washed on a public water access ramp” This is disgraceful! Not one recommendation requiring OHV dedicated funds to repair damage or fund enforcement reached “informed consent.” OHV users say they are for protection of the environment yet they voted down even the most basic resource protection recommendations (such as “natural resource protection being the primary criteria for trail planning not to the exclusion of the economy or social factors.”)

Aside from the well intentioned efforts from the majority of Task Force members and DNR facilitators, the substantive results of the final report in regards to environmental protection and enforcement could easily have been accomplished by the legislature and DNR, it should not have required twenty-one people over six months to develop such a weak report.

Future: Our state forest lands have a long tradition and cultural importance to Minnesota values. If OHV use is not brought into parameters of sensible and restricted use it will jeopardize other sustainable and traditional uses. The DNR Division of Trails and Waterways, OHV groups and manufacturers, and Minnesota Forest Industries are on the verge of taking control of our state forests. All the before mentioned groups worked in unison to block basic recommendations in the Task Force. If the legislature fails to enact tougher restrictions our state forests will become OHV parks and resource extraction sites. Our state forests will increasingly become the marketplace for every new contraption developed by ORV manufacturers. The term, “clientele” is used repeatedly by the DNR in referring to its user groups. The primary “client” of the DNR needs to be the “Natural Resource” - not recreationalists (motorized or nonmotorized.)

What makes us unique as Minnesotans and Americans are our public lands and semi-wild places. Without adequate measures to protect the environment with increase OHV enforcement; this heritage will be in jeopardy. It will be the majority of Minnesotans who will suffer while an extreme minority benefit.

Barry W. Babcock

Personal message by Jerry Bahls

Task Force Process: The method used to reach the approved Recommendations was very good. It gave everyone an equal opportunity to put before the body recommendations that were important to them. At first I felt the method of voting red, yellow and green, on these proposed recommendations would not work. And indeed after the first meeting of voting, my fears were substantiated, with only a couple of recommendations receiving all green votes. However with the mediating skill of Brian Stenquist, we were able to move several recommendations forward. Subsequent recommendations in later rounds were likewise approved using this process.

Too many fact-finding meetings limited time so that more substantive recommendations could be debated. Endless meetings were held with information that could have been supplied over the internet or on paper. Too little time was devoted to Task force Members asking questions on the material presented. We should have begun the recommendations rounds in October and not waited until November. I felt we were unable to thoroughly debate some of the more critical issues on which we could have come to consensus, if we had had more time.

Report Content: The report is a good summary of our meetings. The recommendations that were approved were good ones, but didn't get to the heart of the issue. Too many good recommendations were not approved or debated. However, they are included in the report.

The Future: Failure to come to an agreement on recommendations that address the heart of the issues will lead to more frustration by all involved with motorized trails on state forests and with the use of OHV's in the state. Motorized users must recognize that a thorough review of all trails on state lands for possible environmental damage is essential to get those opposed to motorized trails to agree to the development of trails. They must recognize that state lands need to be sustainably managed. We must err on the side of the environment! They must also be willing to allow the dedicated funds to be used to mitigate the damage caused by OHV's, both the physical damage and the public opinion damage. There is real anger out there! For those opposed to motorized trails, they need to recognize that the machines are going to be here for a long time. Trails need to be developed both on public and private lands to accommodate the pressure. The sooner they are in place, the sooner the damage will be curtailed. Public lands can accommodate minimal impact riding in scenic areas. Private lands or public areas like the Gilbert OHV Recreation Area must be used for the more challenging riding that has a high impact on the environment. These areas must be located in all corners of the state and not just in one area, like currently, in north-central Minnesota!

Unless we all understand the implications above we are all going to suffer. The quality of life, which is so valued in Minnesota, will be degraded.

- Jerry Bahls, Fridley, MN

Personal message by Tom Baumann

The Process - I believe, in general, the process provided a credible opportunity for the task force: to learn more about OHV issues, concerns, and status; to proceed with an orderly review of the issues; and to develop recommendations to deal with these issues. The process design was sound and adaptable. The meetings were well-run.

However, while it was laudable for the task force to operate by an “informed consent” decision-making process, views were so polarized and intractable on some issues that proceeding with this type of approach seemed to insure that the really tough questions would go unanswered.

Also, in hindsight, we probably should have devoted more time to discussing and developing recommendations. This would have come at the expense of learning more about the issues and concerns, however, which was a tough call to make.

The Content – The recommendations agreed to by the whole task force provide some useful direction to the DNR and the State Legislature.

However, because of the contentiousness of this issue the most meaningful recommendations were not effectively resolved, and fell by the wayside. Our failure to deal with these bigger issues makes me conclude that the task force did not adequately fulfill its charge, leaving key issues to fester, or be determined in another forum.

The Future – I am very concerned about how the future will unfold for OHV use on state lands. To my mind, the task force did little more than tweak the status quo; leaving a condition, which I believe is neither sustainable nor desirable.

The criticisms leveled in media last spring that revitalized legislative interest in this issue, were not addressed. I believe the public policy debate will continue, and intensify until important decisions are made.

Personal message by Rachel Benishek

My thoughts about the ATV Taskforce are a mix of negative, positive and everything in between. When I was appointed to the taskforce, I had few pre-conceived notions about motorized recreation. I know people who own and operate ATVs and ORVs, but I do not own or use one for recreation. I had even less understanding of the controversy surrounding motorized recreation in Minnesota. I walked into my first taskforce meeting a fairly clean slate, with only a concern for protecting forest management access on my list to bring to the table. Overall, I can say that I learned a lot about the controversy, the sport, and the concerns of all the stakeholders involved with this process.

It is difficult to write about the taskforce process itself. While there was much good information presented by the speakers, many questions were never addressed, no matter how often they were asked. I was disappointed that there was so little emphasis on the positive aspects of motorized recreation. Either from an economic standpoint or from someone in Trails and Waterways offering a discussion about the positive effects of clubs with the grant-in-aid trail systems and educational efforts. One thing that I did learn very clearly was the system in Minnesota does not work. There is no truly managed trail system in the state and many of our deliberations were hindered because of the lack of both management and the information associated with active management and the use of signs, maps, education and enforcement. Many of the contested issues revolve around trail management and “illegal riding activities” or non-enforcement issues in certain areas. The questions often came down to “would that activity have happened if there were signs or other efforts to prevent it?” We have no idea because there is no real management of trail systems or the creation of trails at this point in time. I believe that our process was further obstructed though an imbalance of interested stakeholders. Voices were often drowned out, either by the facilitators or by the co-chairs who did not provide for views to be fully expressed during group discussions. There were meetings and discussions that left many people feeling beaten and abused because they stood by their opinions. There were even incidences of the co-chairs belittling and discrediting individuals. To say I was disappointed in the professionalism and management of the process would be an understatement.

The content of this report is unremarkable. This is not surprising considering the difficulties expressed above. However, I fully believe that some of our recommendations are trying to get at the meat of the problem. We need a well-managed trail system in Minnesota. Until motorized and non-motorized users know where they are allowed to go, the rules pertaining to their particular form of recreation and all trail use is enforced, it will be very difficult to determine how many more trails of what type, length and ability level will be needed. Until there is a well managed trail system available for use, Minnesota will continue to have difficulties with enforcement and use of motorized recreational vehicles and non-motorized users. It was nearly impossible to bring all the taskforce members to agreement at the table. The recommendations that passed are remarkable in that there was agreement from all parties. Many of the recommendations that did not pass were close, but had one or two dissenters who were against anything to do with motorized use of public lands. I hope that the appendices listing the number of votes are helpful to the organizations utilizing this report.

Rachel Benishek
Duluth, MN

Personal message by Lois Campbell

The Task Force Process

Even after sitting in task force meetings for 55 hours spread over a six month time frame plus a multitude of time spent in reviewing materials and prepping for meetings, I still feel that we should have spent additional time meeting on this effort. We knew that we would be hard-pressed to finish by the due date and in the end, I feel that this report is being turned in without organized, quality completion.

A majority of our meetings were spent in listening to a long list of speakers, a few who were well-versed in the topic of off-highway vehicles trails, and some who were not. We heard a great deal of opinions and suppositions. In fact, we had a presenter who admitted to have not had experience with off-highway vehicles except for what he had read in the newspaper. We heard little about any studies that have been conducted or scientific data to help lead us to make informed decisions.

I was disappointed in the lack of leadership by the co-chairs that were appointed along with the bias that was clearly displayed. Early in the process I hoped that having two non-motorized chairs might be a positive by giving credibility to the task force. Unfortunately by the end, I realized that I had been mistaken. They pushed to not even have the benefits of motorized trails presented, and gave in only after more than one heated discussion. Both the co-chairs and DNR facilitator allowed certain task force members to take up a great deal of time in lengthy unproductive tangents attacking OHV use often with misinformation and half-truths. During the final four meetings when the recommendations were being decided, the co-chairs themselves were involved in disrespectful chastisement of other task force members when particular members would not agree to a proposed recommendation.

Content of the Report

This document contains many ideas that should be taken into consideration by the DNR and attempts to encompass the vast range of topics given by the 2002 legislature to review and to give recommendations on. Some of the recommendations affirm what is already in process of being done.

The protection of our natural resources played a key role in the discussion of every recommendation that was reviewed. The assignment of the recommendations topically does not reflect that any of our recommendations address the protection of our natural resources, yet many of the recommendations directly relate to the protection of natural resources. For example, listed under trail process and development, 2.2 recommends that the DNR should develop and implement explicit design standards that protect natural resources from trail impacts.

What is truly lacking in the content of this report is an overall recommendation to get a well-designed, environmentally friendly trail system on-the-ground as soon as possible.

The Future

The process of trail design and designation needs to become pro-active instead of being held in restraints indefinitely by legal battles and "cold feet". Minnesota has the opportunity to take the "bull by the horns" and design a good quality trail system for off-highway vehicles. Let's become proactive instead of reactive.

Respectfully submitted,
Lois Campbell

Personal message by Steve DeMuth

When I first discovered the DNR was putting together a task force to address and make recommendations on OHV issues, I was somewhat skeptical of what the final outcome would be. An opportunity was provided for ordinary citizens to participate and have input on a controversial topic that would potentially impact how the state forests were used for future generations to come. I took this opportunity and applied along with 90 other citizens. Once selected as a member of the motorized trail task force, I felt that ordinary citizens would finally have a voice in the recommendation process.

The group of people selected were not ordinary citizens as I had assumed the group would be made up of. The individuals had a wide range of professional backgrounds and special interests to which I initially felt some resentment. Once the meetings started, I discovered that my first impression of the group had been wrong. The people assembled represented a broad spectrum of interests and each person was passionate and committed to their cause. The make up of such a wide range of individuals would make our recommendations sound from all points of view.

We spent a great deal of time hearing from presenters on topics related to OHV use on forest lands and came away with a great deal of valuable information and insight. If I could change one thing, I would look at the time allotted to complete the recommendations. The information we received was extremely useful but we ran short of time at the end and were somewhat rushed when making our final recommendations.

The recommendations the group agreed upon are very good, and if put into place will have some immediate impact on the protection of the resource. Overall, there could have been more recommendations if the group had been given more time or had the group started the recommendation process earlier. I believe there were a number of good recommendations that never made the final report.

I believe these recommendations are an excellent beginning, but more will have to be established in the future. As OHV use continues, interaction with all forest users will only increase and so will the likelihood of conflict and misuse. After spending time with the task force members I do believe there are workable solutions that will meet the needs of all interests while protecting the natural resources for future generations. As a life long citizen of Minnesota, I am very secure in the knowledge that the DNR is looking to our future and is committed to proper natural resource management. During the last six months, I have had the pleasure to meet and listen to a large number of DNR employees all of whom were dedicated professionals. Our recommendations are of little value if the DNR is unable to implement them. It is up to you, the Legislature, to provide these dedicated professionals the funds they need to perform their duties which will ultimately protect our natural resources for future generations.

Personal message by Dave Hendricks

To Whom It May Concern:

I want to thank the DNR for my selection to the MTTF committee. I participated accordingly and believed in what we were attempting to accomplish. I feel responsible to inform readers of this report what I've done while being a MTTF member.

Took a number of personal trips at my own expense to learn and research communities involved with motorized recreation, completing over 700 miles on ATV's in State and National Forests. Provided researched information at my expense to MTTF members, including tourist information from other states.

Solicited comments regarding motorized recreation from small business owners, ATV clubs and private individuals, which was submitted to MTTF members. When possible, responded to numerous comments submitted to the MTTF committee via the web as a common courtesy to those people showing interest in the topics.

Made requests to MTTF members regarding protocol and procedures to obtain our goals, and identified MTTF committee issues with Chairs of the committee. Initiated a systematic approach to reaching informed consent on recommendations, part of which was implemented into the final process. Also, submitted a substantial amount of recommendations for review by the entire MTTF committee.

Lastly, completed an ATV Safety Instructors Course (4 days) sponsored by the ATV Safety Institute, a division of the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America (SVIA) and attended every meeting (13) scheduled, traveling over 3300 miles to participate.

Comments regarding processes' content of report, and future:

A majority of the processes used were uncomfortable. The committee should have had presentations from both sides of topic issues, then meet to discuss, making draft recommendations as we progressed. Even when committee members brought good information into meetings to discuss, many times it was pushed under the carpet in order to keep moving. There were many recommendations the MTTF committee could have worked out, but many members refused compromises and held firm to their organizations stand on the topic.

The content of the report is a first step in the right direction. Apparently, not all recommendations will pass without some conflict. Engineering of trails, education of our public, and enforcement of our natural resources will produce the desired results for both sides of motorized recreation as we move forward.

We are heading in the right direction by addressing these issues and I am willing to offer my services concerning motorized recreation as needed.

Dave Hendricks
MTTF Member

Personal message by John Hunt

I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide my personal comments on the work conducted by the Motorized Trail Task Force in 2002. I believe that my comments, taken in context with the comments of others on the MTTF, will allow readers of this report to better understand how the final document was produced.

In general, I am satisfied with the process that was used to disseminate information, discuss critical topics, and propose and approve recommendations. I am, however, disappointed that a greater number of specific recommendations for increased enforcement and environmental protection were not generated. I am also troubled by our lack of recommendations related to how best to fund all the work that needs to be done relative to future trail planning, trail construction, trail monitoring and maintenance, and enforcement. In light of the state's current budget situation, the MTTF completely failed in its mandate to provide meaningful, reasonable ideas regarding future OHV program funding. Attempts to approve recommendations that included using dedicated OHV gas-tax funds to pay for OHV-specific program elements were rebuffed by a group of people comprised mainly of OHV users. Why? Without adequate funding, the DNR will not be able to implement any of the badly needed improvements in trail maintenance, repair, and enforcement. I was also troubled by our inability to reach consensus on even the most basic recommendations regarding the prioritization of protecting natural resources over recreational use. There seemed to be an attitude by some on the Task Force that the DNR's mission is to balance environmental protection with recreational and commercial use. Even though I am an avid hunter and angler, I truly believe that the DNR must always put the resource first, even if it means reducing hunting, fishing, logging, and other recreational opportunities.

What do I think the future holds for OHV use in Minnesota? I believe that OHV use on Minnesota's state forests over the next 3-5 years will continue to increase, most likely at a rate that exceeds the DNR's ability to properly manage such use. I believe that we will see additional examples of gross environmental damage due to a small proportion of renegade riders. Beyond 5 years, I am hopeful that the DNR will have had an opportunity to develop sufficient designated trail systems that meet the needs of the vast majority of recreational OHV riders. I am also hopeful that the DNR will have increased its commitment to OHV education and enforcement to match that of watercraft and snowmobiles.

Personal message by Dave Kryzer

I submitted my name as a nominee for the Motorized Trails Task Force because I thought I could make a difference. The taskforce sounded like a golden opportunity for getting Off Highway Vehicle trails on the ground. Since I enjoy off road recreation it seemed like a perfect fit. I even canceled my vacation so I would not miss a meeting.

Unfortunately from the very beginning it felt like there was a hidden agenda being pushed by the Department of Natural Resources including the facilitator and non-motorized chairs that were chosen to lead the taskforce. However, it appeared early on that the chairs lacked the leadership required for this taskforce and chose to be just members. This was true even after I asked them to take control of the meeting. As a result, the DNR facilitator took over running the meeting and took us down the commissioner's office preferred trail.

One thing this task force definitely lacked is "Trust". This could be due to the fact that paid non-motorized lobbyists were placed on the task force, which allowed them to move their agenda. In the end it caused more polarization to take place, which made it very difficult to discuss or even vote on controversial recommendations.

The DNR put a lot of effort into educating the Taskforce Committee members on internal departmental conflict and anecdotal impacts of ATV's. Minimal time was spent on trying to educate the Committee Members on proper trail management or in trying to provide suggested recommendations for them to consider. As a result, the motorized participants had to push and even pay part of the fee to have a trail expert come to present to the committee.

Unfortunately, too much time was spent on bashing ATV's and not enough time was spent on the process of developing recommendations and the final document. The process used to develop recommendation was not efficient and often time very redundant in that we had the same recommendation made several times only stated a little different each time. At one point, during the November 19th meeting, several of us taskforce members were chastised by other members, including the chairs, for not agreeing on a recommendation. It is definitely a moment in time I will not forget. Ultimately, the recommendations miss the mark as they have little focus on trails, period, which was to be the objective of this committee.

The rules for participation only applied to certain members. While I did attend every meeting (I was asked if I could make that type of commitment), I noticed one non-motorized member who missed more than half of the meetings, yet nothing was said.

Ground rules changed throughout the process. During the recommendation process we used informed consent to make decisions. If some one could not live with the recommendation it was dropped. Some how though a miraculous change the majority vote process was used to make decisions on what should be included in the report including those recommendations and votes that the Committee did not agree on.

This taskforce has been a waste of time and many thousands of dollars, especially during this budget deficit year. Regardless where the funding comes from, it is a shame to waste the money. Not to mention personal vacation time.

Dave Kryzer
Brooklyn Park, MN

Personal message by Tom Martinson

The Process

I consider it a privilege to have served on the Motorized Trail Task Force. I believe that most of the members that were asked to serve, knew ahead of time that we would not be able to come to complete agreement on all issues. That type of agreement with an intentionally diverse group would have meant that people's values would have had to be changed. I believe that the process was fair and was not only educational, it also brought us, as a group, closer together. After this experience, I do care more about people on all sides of this issue.

I tried to represent my area of the state, and in doing that, I was challenged by people going through different experiences in North Central Minnesota. I toured the forest in that area of the state and will forever be grateful to the dedicated and courageous people that spent time showing me their concerns. Their immediate concerns changed my concerns for my area for the future.

The Content of this Report

It should be known that the members of this task force did not know that recommendations not receiving consensus would be listed in the report. This is important because I believe that no recommendations were offered by members just to be listed in appendix A and B. With that fact in mind, I think it is important to carefully look at the recommendations that didn't make the main report, to see what issues were thought to be important but couldn't be agreed upon by everyone. Some of the most important recommendation can be found there.

I would especially like to thank the members of the Task Force that were acting as volunteers and did not get paid for their time traveling and attending meetings. I thank these people for their efforts and dedication above and beyond the call of duty. I would also like to thank the DNR for their efforts in an arena where it is hard to come out a winner.

Personal message by Greg Murray

TASK FORCE PROCESS: The process which started with a gathering of information from many sources and ended up with making recommendations through unanimous consent worked well and allowed for the task force to clarify misconceptions, formulate proposals and discuss them in a lively manner. During the process it became evident that there was mistrust and suspicion from both ends of the issue, however the majority of the people who were in the "center" of the issue came forth with good and reasonable recommendations. The unfortunate factor was the lack of time to bring more of the recommendations to consensus. The mistrust and suspicion, I believe, would have started to go away with more time to discuss the more controversial recommendations at greater length so that both "sides" would have a clearer understanding of where everyone was coming from.

REPORT CONTENT: The recommendations that were agreed upon in the report are good and should help to advance some better policies for the DNR to better manage OHV use in Minnesota. The unfortunate lack of agreement on recommendations that would have called for protection of natural resources in the OHV management process showed that the motorized interests were more interested in protecting what they had rather than laying a framework that would have lead to a better OHV system in Minnesota for the future. When various proposals came forth regarding the protection of natural resources, the discussion always went to the motorized interests concern that without a clear "balancing" of the environment, recreational interests and economic interests that their interests would be shelved. While most of the task force members agreed that the DNR faces a difficult task in balancing the interests, without a clear statement that says the DNR must put the environment first, the OHV program will continue to face criticism from environmentalists and face delays, lawsuits and frustration over the best way to get trails on the ground.

THE FUTURE: One of the recommendations that did pass was that of Citizens Oversight Committee to help the DNR manage motorized use. Without continued dialogue about the issues facing this program there is great concern about an environmentally acceptable OHV program existing in Minnesota. Without meaningful compromise in the future, OHV management will continue to be a contentious issue for the DNR and will continue to breed mistrust and suspicion.

Personal message by Matt Norton

At the first task force meeting, members stated their hopes for the task force. My hope was that future generations of Minnesotans would look at our recommendations, look proudly at the condition of our public lands, and thank the task force for its work. Now that the task force has finished, I have no great expectation of that coming to pass.

Process: We, the task force, met thirteen times. An introductory meeting in June was followed by two meetings per month, from July through December. After the introductory meeting, eight meetings were spent hearing the information and perspectives of a range of people and organizations. Some of the presenters were chosen by the task force. The last four meetings were spent submitting, discussing, and voting on recommendations.

We identified how many and which proposed recommendations to discuss using a “yes-first” approach, whereby we agreed to focus first on those proposals that we believed all 21 task force members could agree to, before moving on to more contentious proposals. We agreed that proposals would pass by unanimous consent; one person could withhold his or her consent and thereby block a proposal from becoming a formal recommendation.

The process for identifying proposals produced a good number of agreeable, straightforward, proposed recommendations for discussion. Many of these recommendations, however, were voted down by one or two votes, despite efforts to understand and address concerns, and to change wording to as to find compromise. The bulk of the recommendations that were defeated by just a few votes were what I would call common sense proposals aimed at natural resource protection and repair; prevention of future resource damage; improving compliance and enforcement capabilities; and determining motorized recreation’s real, total costs, which are now being born by the state, counties, and cities. Blocking votes were cast, by and large, by motorized members of the task force who were, on some occasions, unwilling or unable to articulate a reason for their opposition. On other occasions, it was clear that they were simply unwilling to compromise, if it meant putting protection of the state’s natural resources ahead of the status quo, which they feel entitles them to ride even the worst, most damaging trails.

Content: The formal recommendations reported by us to the Minnesota Legislature and DNR garnered unanimous support. Coming from a 21-person task force with such divergent opinions, these unanimous recommendations are important and deserve attention.

Still, they are just a start. Even if they are written into law, the unanimous recommendations alone will not solve the severe and growing problems that caused the creation of the task force: 1) resource damage on Minnesota’s public lands; and 2) social conflict caused by that resource damage, and by the way motorized recreation tends to exclude traditional non-motorized uses of public lands.

Future: The legislature should look at the recommendations of the task force as the foundation for legislation to be passed this session; the foundation has been poured, but the house remains to be built. When the complete legislation is passed, it should ensure that future generations of Minnesotans can thank us for passing to them our precious public lands in a condition that is equal to or better than the condition in which we received them.

Matt Norton
St. Paul, Minnesota,
December 30, 2002

Personal message by Tom Spence

Task Force Process: The Process was good. Decisions were made on a unanimous consent basis. No recommendation could advance without unanimous support. After six months of gathering information, discussing issues and recommendations, we estimate that each member devoted in excess of 240 hours to the project. Neither motorized nor non-motorized interests were entirely satisfied with the Process. In October non-motorized interests were on the verge of leaving the Task Force en mass. In November motorized interests were complaining to DNR executives about the unfairness of the proceedings. The fact that both sides expressed some displeasure about how things were going was probably a good indication that we were doing something right. If the Process had a flaw, it was lack of sufficient time to deal with issues. In hindsight, 9 to 12 months would have been appropriate for completing our work.

Report Content: The Recommendations are acceptable. The Recommendations could have been better and more complete. Task Force members representing both motorized and non-motorized interests came to the table with a deep suspicion and mistrust of the motivations of the other side. Because every member essentially had a veto over any recommendation (unanimous consent), it was essential that the suspicion and mistrust be overcome. Ultimately, some members representing motorized interests could not set aside their suspicion and mistrust. The result is a watered down set of Recommendations. For example, virtually any recommendation that dealt with closing environmentally damaging trails or the use of the Dedicated Motorized Account funds consistently drew 3 to 6 vetoes. (See App. A # 24 &74, p 11) Many of those Recommendations were reasonable and deserved a better fate. Probably the best Recommendation offered is found at Appendix A# 63, p 11. It provides for accelerated evaluation, upgrading and designating of motorized trails. It drew vetoes for no other reason than it also provided for the closure of inappropriate trails.

The Future: There is legitimate cause for concern about the future of environmentally acceptable motorized trails in Minnesota. Part of the concern is because of the feeling of “entitlement” on the part of motorized user interests, with no corresponding acceptance of responsibility for damage caused to the environment. In addition there is cause for concern because of the intense mistrust and suspicion displayed by the motorized interests. The best Recommendation that survived is # 8.2, p8. It recommends a permanent, balanced Citizens Committee to consider motorized issues .The Committee would report annually to the Legislature and the DNR with recommendations. It is a concept that has worked well in California. If the Committee is comprised of reasonable people, willing to set aside suspicion and mistrust, it can go a long way toward bringing the discussion of motorized issues to a civil, rational level. That, in turn, could lead to meaningful compromise and substantial recommendations. The fact that its members would meet regularly to discuss issues would help to instill respect for different opinions and to dissipate the mistrust of others’ motives. Unfortunately, we were not able to reach that level of trust in our six months of work as a Task Force.

Tom Spence Co-Chairperson,
Schroeder, Minnesota

December 31, 2002