

Draft Meeting Notes from Motorized Trail Task Force
September 17, 2002, St. Paul, MN

The commentary witnessed in these notes reflects the individual opinion and experiences of the speaker and as such do not present official positions of the organization they represent unless specifically noted. Speaker's presentations are not necessarily expert advice or data.

Presentation and Discussion Notes

Tim Wegner, Dale Gunberg, Minnesota Off Road Cyclists

- Gave a presentation about bicycle trails, trail construction, and maintenance. Refer to powerpoint presentation for additional information about their presentation.
- Proper trail layout and construction is key to sustainable trails.
- Mountain bikers would like to share ohm trails if they are constructed correctly.
- Mountain bikers have very few issues with OHV's.

Bob Janssen, Minnesota Ornithologists Union

- Birding is fastest growing hobby in the US
- 70 million people in the US, 2 million in MN
- Humans influence the distribution and abundance of birds
- Some species such as gulls increasing in number as they feed on garbage
- If not for State Forests, State Parks and Wildlife Management Areas there would be very few places for birds to exist and birders to be able to watch
- OHV's are in direct conflict with birds
- What type of experience do birders look for in State Forest, any conflicts with multiple use? Birders often use non-motorized trails, but motorized vehicles CAN DISTURB BIRDS, preclude some birds, especially breeding activity, so they typically avoid motorized trails.
- Do birders use trails to get to the areas they watch birds? Some do, but it's probably uncommon.
- Would a larger number of trails negatively affect bird populations? Proximity of disturbance is an important factor affecting birds.
- Some birds can become accustomed to noisy environments (i.e. eagles nest at the end of an airport runway).
- Is there a time of day when birders prefer to observe? Birds are most active during the morning and evening.

Cliff Bloberger, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association

- MDHA in full support of designated trails for OHV's
- Hours of use for OHV's are controlled during gun season but not during bow season and black powder. During those times they would like to see OHV's limited to designated trails, so that hunters can avoid those areas if they choose.
- MDHA would like to maintain the ability to use OHV's to put up a deer stands and retrieve game
- OHV traffic on trails can have a significant impact on deer populations, both positively and negatively, especially during winter and spring. Packed trails provide ease of movement for deer during times of heavy snow. Spring fawning season is a particularly sensitive time of year.
- A requirement to carry a deer-hunting license for any off trail riding during deer season would be reasonable.
- Question about the MDHA position regarding forest classification and the exemption for use during the hunting season. MDHA is for the exemption for off trail travel during the firearm deer-hunting season.
- Requested MDHA official position

Mike LeFleur, Izaak Walton League Member

- Conservation organization, focused on sustaining natural resources
- IWL attitudes regarding ATV's are represented in "Beyond Fair Chase"
- Hunting in the Nemadji State Forest is no longer an enjoyable experience because of increased ATV use
- Understand the need to allow exceptions for disabled hunters
- We have to manage the integrity of trails in State Forests to protect resources
- Enforcement on public land should be increased and funded by OHV dedicated account
- Education is important but it needs to be funded adequately we don't want to see it get diluted
- Hope the task force would consider a recommendation prohibiting the use of OHV's for hunting and close trails during hunting season.

Jan Schatzlein,

- Horseback riding is increasing in popularity, more and more families go camping and riding.
- Horseback riders can typically hear ATV's coming, haven't had many conflicts.
- Mountain bikes often come up quickly and quietly, which does cause some conflicts

- Concern about decline in trails and concentrating usage
- What is the preferred surface for horseback?
- Gravel is fine, dirt is preferred, dislike asphalt, some folks like obstacles like logs and streams
- How far do people like to ride in a day?
- In the metro short trips are more common, out-state 10 to 20 miles trips are more preferred, also prefer loops.
- Seasonal timing is an issue; prime season is spring and fall (less bugs), some winter use.
- Do horseback riders have any conflicts with other users? Seems like there is always a vocal, small percentage that have issues.
- Multi-use trails are the way to go.
- Prefer a situation where motorized users yield to horses, horseback riders also have a responsibility to train their horses before going on multiuse trails.
- Signs that indicate who yields to who are helpful
- Gave examples where motorized users showed trail courtesy.

Proposed Format for Task Force Report

- Discussed how the task force will determine what recommendations will come forward and how they will reach consensus
- Preference indication may undercut the hard work toward reaching informed consent.
- Concern about the consolidation of and sorting through a large variety of recommendations about similar issues.
- A large number of recommendations could come forward with limited time review them, how do we handle this efficiently?
- Suggested each task force member bring forward 2 or 3 recommendations that they think everyone will be able to agree to, a small group combines the similar ones, hoping to at least get 10 or 15 of the “easy” ones done.

Follow-up

- Request the DNR provide a list of the amount of land in State ownership in various types of management classification, miles of existing trails, and existing usage.
- What does it cost to make a trail, what does it cost to maintain a trail, cost to enforce it, and comparisons with other states.
- Need a financial background about accounts, what’s there, how is it distributed.

- Need to know how much OHV's contribute to the state's budget (i.e. sales tax, gas tax, manufactures contributions, dealer fees, license fees, etc...).
- Get MDHA official position