



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Allegheny National Forest
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File Code: 2250/2250-1

Date: November 6, 2006

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Bob Imhof
Project Manager
Pennsylvania Wilds Planning Team
651 Montmorenci Road
Ridgway, PA 15853

Dear Mr. Imhof:

We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Report for the North Central ATV Trails Network Feasibility Study (NCATVFS). The following comments are based on our review of the study, which, if it were implemented in its present form, would have direct impacts on the Allegheny National Forest and our designated ATV trail systems.

The McKean County portion of the NCATVFS has a trailhead facility located on private land near Marshburg which would then connect to the proposed Willow Creek ATV Trail Expansion project. This is a great idea. Unfortunately, it does not fit well with the Preferred Alternative selected for the Willow Creek project. During the project analysis significant concerns were identified and subsequent public comment was tendered pertaining to wildlife, soil/water, and social impacts. Based on these findings, all new trail construction activities in the southern third of the Marshburg/Stickney IUA were dropped in the Preferred Alternative.

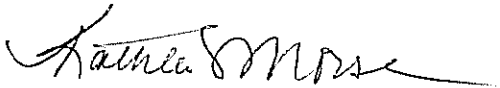
The NCATVFS also proposes connections to the Timberline ATV Trail system from Kane and Ridgway using existing snowmobile routes located on Forest Service (FS) roads. Historically the Allegheny National Forest has provided snowmobile users approximately 240 miles of riding opportunity on joint-use FS roads. These roads are typically groomed for snowmobiles and traffic from other motor vehicles is limited. Most of the traffic encountered by snowmobiles is from timber operators accessing timber sale areas or oil and gas operators. Strict restrictions do apply for these operators for obvious safety concerns. Current Forest policy does not permit ATV use on joint use roads because of safety, resource protection, and maintenance concerns, with some limited exceptions for existing bridge crossings.

Your team's objective of connecting the communities of Marshburg, Kane, and Ridgway to the Timberline and Willow Creek ATV trails could adversely impact efforts to manage these trails. Rider safety and satisfaction, while protecting resources, are our primary goals. Our trails currently limit access by design through developed trailhead facilities. This enables riders to have the recreational experience they desire by preventing congestion on any particular trail. Designed access points greatly increase our ability to inform the public and to enforce policies. Higher use through essentially unlimited access points within communities would jeopardize our ability to stay abreast of the significant maintenance that ATV trails require.



I recognize these comments may appear discouraging to your efforts to enhance ATV riding opportunities on the ANF. Please rest assured that we share the mutual goals of improving both our recreational assets and the potential for economic development in the Pennsylvania Wilds region. Working in close collaboration will allow us to share other ideas and learn from each other. To that end, we appreciate the opportunity to review your proposals and trust this is only the beginning of our dialogue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen Morse". The signature is written in black ink and has a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

KATHLEEN S. MORSE
Forest Supervisor