

WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

ATV/UTV TRAIL & LAW ENFORCEMENT FUNDING

Wisconsin counties hold significant acreage of lands enrolled under Wisconsin's County Forest Law (State Statutes §28.10 & 28.11). Citizens of Wisconsin value these County Forests because they provide reliable raw materials for the forest products industry as well as public access and recreation programs on more than 2.4 million acres of forested lands. These county forests are a large part of what makes northern Wisconsin unique and collectively make up the largest public forested land holdings in the State. As part of the recreation programs, these county forests host and/or manage over 85% of the official, off-road, ATV trail systems in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides aids for the management of these ATV/UTV trails through grants funded from machine registrations, trail passes, and gas tax allocations. The grant programs provide for trail development, rehabilitation and maintenance as well as law enforcement aids.

The ATV/UTV sport has seen dramatic growth over the last 5 years, with an increase of over 25% in registered machines. This steady increase in machines has resulted in a significant surplus of revenues over expenditures and a large "fund" balance in the segregated ATV account. At the same time, trail sponsors are struggling to maintain trails with the existing funding allocations. Ever increasing costs of fuel, materials and time, along with higher traffic volumes, coupled with ever larger machine size and power, result in trail sponsors (primarily counties) not having sufficient funds to maintain trails.

CURRENT STATUS: Currently, grants are awarded to local units of government at a rate of \$600/mile for ATV trail maintenance and an additional \$200/mile for UTV trail maintenance. The program also offers aids to Sheriff's Departments for reimbursing ATV/UTV patrols.

In addition, local Sheriff Departments are struggling to provide appropriate levels of law enforcement for the growing use and pressure. The most recent funding cycle for WDNR ATV/UTV patrol aids resulted in a 63% pro-rate in reimbursement funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Increase the annual summer trail UTV maintenance funding from \$200/mile to \$400/mile, which would result in an additional annual allocation of approximately \$425,000. This will provide assistance in trying to manage trail impacts from increase numbers and size of ATV's and UTV's on trail systems.
2. Increase the hybrid (Troute) trail funding to allow for 50% of the per mile trail maintenance rate to include the UTV funding rate. Under the current trail maintenance funding rates this would be an annual increase of approximately \$27,000. If the UTV funding rate is increased from \$200 to \$400 per mile, the annual increase would be approximately \$46,000.
3. Increase the annual budget allocation for county ATV law enforcement aids from \$750,000 to \$1,300,000. This will provide short term elimination of the pro-rate within the law enforcement reimbursement program.

It should be noted these measures are also supported by the Wisconsin ATV Association, the Badger State Sheriff's Association and the Wisconsin Towns Association.

For more information, please contact:

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