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Memo

To: St. Louis County Commissioners
From: Caleb Wolden, Program Director, Minnesotans for Responsible Recreation
Re: DNR ATV Plan for Cloquet Valley State Forest
Date: March 9, 2007
CC: St. Louis County MRR Members

MRR understands that the Saint Louis County Board of Commissioners, at its Tuesday, March 13 meeting in Duluth, will be hearing and potentially taking action on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' plan for designating ATV routes in the Cloquet Valley State Forest

MRR seeks middle ground in the designation of routes for ATVs in the Cloquet Valley and other Minnesota state forests. MRR supports plans that address and implement each of the below *Five Standards for Protecting Minnesota* and calls on the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners to implement these standards as you consider ATV routes for the Cloquet Valley State Forest.

1. Public and environmental review - i.e. the completion of Environmental Assessment Worksheets (EAWs) - to select routes. An EAW is a three-page, thirty question worksheet that requires proposers of ATV routes to examine and address potential unwanted ATV effects on soils, vegetation, wetlands, water quality, air quality, fisheries, wildlife and adjacent recreation activities. Completion of EAWs on proposed ATV routes is the number one recommendation of the 2003 Legislative Auditor's Report. While public hearings may be held, only the EAW process allows concerned citizens to hold proposers accountable in addressing potential unwanted effects.

2. Designated routes only policy requiring machines to stay on selected routes. ATV use must be limited to selected routes to protect natural resources, enhance enforcement, and decrease conflict with other recreationists. ATVs should travel only on routes posted "Open" to such use.

3. Adequate enforcement to keep riders on selected routes. While over 600 state troopers patrol Minnesota highways, fewer than 150 *Conservation Officers* exist to patrol Minnesota's public lands. An *adequate* enforcement plan is essential to restricting operators of ATVs to selected routes.

4. Adequate funds used to repair accumulating damage. Extensive documentation exists that ATVs have caused significant damage to Minnesota's public land. Even once ATV use has been restricted to designated routes, areas in which vegetation is gone and soil is compacted and running off into streams must be repaired. MRR's *Cost of Restoration Analysis* of damaged areas indicates that significant funds and a planned effort will be required to restore these areas.

5. Oversight and accountability to achieve above objectives. MRR understands that St. Louis County will provide public funds to local ATV clubs to *maintain* ATV routes in the Cloquet Valley State Forest. A MRR audit, soon to be released, of Saint Louis County's public funding of snowmobile routes has revealed the county currently fails to meet basic legal and contractual requirements in the administration of these public funds. MRR recommends that the County appropriate funds from trail grants to provide oversight and comply with state grant agreements and local, state and federal laws.