



Toolkit for the Quiet Majority

Challenging Public Funding of Motorized Recreation

How the Public Funds Motorized Recreation

Every Minnesotan who buys gasoline in our state automatically pays into “dedicated accounts” for snowmobiles, ATVs, dirt-bike motorcycles, four-wheel drive trucks and motorboats in the \$0.20 per gallon gas-tax one pays at the pump. Each form of motorized recreation receives a legislated percentage of the state’s annually collected gas tax revenue (see below). Snowmobile clubs receive a full 1% of the state’s annually collected gas-tax revenue, over \$5 million each year - whether it snows or not. Minnesotans and our guests pay over \$15 million annually at the pump to promote motorized recreation. These public funds are used to pay the salaries of DNR administrators and Trails and Waterways Division staff and to “reimburse” snowmobile and ATV club members to promote motorized recreation.

Every snowmobile and ATV club that receives public funds does so through a local unit of government acting as the club’s fiscal agent. The local unit of government receives funds from the DNR and disburses them to the *Trail Administrators* of local snowmobile and ATV clubs who disburse these public funds to club members and officers. Club members are reimbursed with public funds for bulldozing, chainsawing, computer work, attending meetings, mileage, and other “allowable charges” enumerated in the DNR’s Snowmobile and ATV Trail Assistance Program manuals.

Local units of government that sponsor snowmobile and ATV clubs pass resolutions authorizing disbursement of public funds to local clubs. Local units of government are required to have easements from all landowners whose property is crossed and permits to cross streams or operate in wetlands.

A 2003 Office of the Legislative Auditor’s Program Evaluation Report: State Funded Trails for Motorized Recreation finds that snowmobile and ATV clubs are operating without oversight or accountability. Publicly funded snowmobile and ATV clubs on their bulldozers have done extensive damage to public and private land. See MRR Case Studies for Reform.

Snowmobiles and ATVs are non-Paying users of Minnesota’s right-of-ways. Gas-tax funds dedicated to motorized recreation are taken away from MnDOT accounts for repairing the state’s roads and bridges. ATVs and dirt-bike motorcycles are causing such significant damage to Minnesota’s right of ways that MnDOT has proposed prohibiting these machines along the state’s highways. Minnesota has 18,000 miles of snowmobile trails, much of which are in Minnesota’s publicly funded right-of-ways.

Minnesota’s Gas-Tax Dollars Flowing to Motorized Recreation

Minnesotans pay \$0.20/gallon in state gas-tax at the pump. Over 2.5% goes to “dedicated accounts” for motorized recreation in the DNR, \$15 million each year.

% Gas Tax Received and 2005 Public Funding		
Snowmobiles	1%	\$5,299,597
ATVs	.0015%,	\$ 794,939
Dirt-bike motorcycles	.046% ,	\$ 243,781
Four-wheel drive trucks	.00164%	\$ 869,133
Motorboats	1.5%	\$7,949,395

\$15 million in public funding to motorized recreation.

