

Minnesotans for Responsible Recreation

"Minnesota's Voice for Peace and Quiet and Healthy Trails and Waterways"

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Motorized Recreation Enforcement: Fact Sheet and Recommendations

Enforcement Facts

- Pervasive illegal use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) throughout Minnesota on public lands posted closed to these machines is well documented. *Off-Highway Vehicles in Minnesota, Minnesotans for Responsible Recreation, 1999*
- "While we have 600 state troopers to patrol our highways in Minnesota, we have only 150 Conservation Officers (CO's) to patrol the entire state of Minnesota. To make matters worse, as COs retire, they are not replaced so that we now have as many as 20 'stations' vacant right now." *DNR Conservation Officer, Summer, 1999*
- Conservation officers now predict as many as 40 vacant staff positions by the end of year 2000. *DNR Officials, 1/2000*
- Conservation Officers are budgeted only 23 hours per year to enforce OHV laws. *DNR Officials, 1999*
- In the past 60 years Minnesota's population has grown from 2.8 to 4.7 million people
- Despite this growth only two additional conservation officers have been provided
- Minnesota hunters and anglers have nearly doubled between 1940 and 1999.
- "Dozens of new responsibilities have been added" including the introduction and growth of recreational vehicles (including snowmobiles, high-powered watercraft and OHVs) from 25,000 starting in 1960, to about 400,000 in 1999. *DNR Fact Sheet, 12/99*

Funding Fact

- Over \$10 million currently exists in accounts administered by the DNR Trails and Waterways Division that is dedicated to motorized recreation and partially earmarked for enforcement. There is not a shortage of available funds for providing adequate enforcement of motorized recreation laws. *DNR Official, End of Fiscal Year 1999 Balance for Water Recreation, Snowmobile, and OHV accounts, 1/00*

Common Sense Recommendations for Providing Adequate Enforcement of Motorized Recreation Laws

(The following recommendations are endorsed by legislators and/or enforcement officials and are more fully discussed in HF 2618, 1998, "The Minnesota Right to Peace and Quiet Act" and Off-Highway Vehicles in Minnesota, MRR, 1999.)

- Fund adequate enforcement of motorized recreation laws as the # 1 priority in use of dedicated motorized recreation accounts.
- Create and widely publicize a 1-800 Motorized Recreation Enforcement Hotline (similar to the "TIP Line" and past 1-800 Snowmobile Complaint Hotline) to readily respond to OHV, high-powered watercraft and snowmobile complaints and violations. Combine this data with that from law enforcement agencies statewide. Publish this information quarterly. Begin to use this data to define what "adequate enforcement" of motorized recreation might be.
- Create a "Motorized Recreation Enforcement" subdivision within the DNR Enforcement Division to provide staff, training and equipment and focused strategies specific to motorized recreation.
- Require motorized recreational vehicles and their operators to meet all the standards and responsibilities required of automobiles and their operators including larger "automobile size" license plates front and rear, PLPD insurance, and drivers license endorsement(s)