



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

REBECCA A. HUMPHRIES
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: November 7, 2006

Memorandum to the Natural Resources Commission

SUBJECT: Adoption of the Updated Michigan Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Plan

Authority:

Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, Part 811 – “Off-Road Recreation Vehicles.”

Discussion and Background:

The Department of Natural Resources (Department) is responsible for managing an extensive system of designated ORV trails, routes, and areas for public use.

The first statutory regulation of ORVs in Michigan was through 1975 PA 319. This Act required the Department to develop a comprehensive plan for the management of ORV use of areas, forest roads, and forest trails maintained by, or under, the jurisdiction of the Department. As a result, the Department published the first ORV plan in 1979. That plan recommended minimizing social conflict, meeting outdoor recreation needs, and protecting environmental integrity by confining ORV use on state public lands to the state forest roads and a system of designated ORV trails, routes, and areas. It also noted the need to have ORV riding facilities available to the public in southern Michigan where there were (and are) no state forest lands. Subsequently, the legislature, through passage of 1991 PA 17, further restricted the use of ORVs on Lower Peninsula public lands only to designated trails, routes, and areas; closing undesignated forest roads to ORV use.

A Department-initiated public planning process during 2004-2005 to update the ORV plan and assess program needs, resulted in diverse opinion. The process began with a proposal by Michigan State University (MSU) to update Michigan’s ORV plan. Once accepted, the process publicly began with a presentation to the ORV Advisory Board in May 2004. Since then there has been significant public involvement through three geographically distributed public information meetings, workshops with ORV trail maintenance and environmental restoration grant recipients, opportunities for written comment and mail surveys of Michigan county sheriffs, northern Michigan road commission managers, and ORV coordinators from 49 states. Also, two meetings were held with Department field personnel and one with the management team of Forest, Mineral and Fire Management, the lead division in ORV planning and administration. Finally, the author reviewed legislative history and research concerning ORV use and users in Michigan and elsewhere.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

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The Department accepted the draft plan from MSU on August 10, 2005. The management team of Forest, Mineral, and Fire Management reviewed specific plan recommendations and developed draft Department comments. The Department comments were discussed with, and endorsed by, the Department management team on August 29, 2006. The Department comments are being submitted to the Natural Resources Commission, along with the updated ORV plan, for information and adoption.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval and adoption of the proposed Department comments and updated Michigan Off-Road Vehicle Plan.

This item will appear on the November 27, 2006 Department Calendar for INFORMATION ONLY.

It will also appear on the January 3, 2007 Department Calendar, and be eligible for approval on January 11, 2007.

Lynne M. Boyd, Chief
Forest, Mineral, and Fire Management

Ronald Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation

Alan Marble, Chief
Law Enforcement

William E. Moritz, Chief
Wildlife

Arminda S. Koch
Resource Management Deputy

Dennis R. Fedewa
Chief Deputy

I approve the staff recommendation.

Rebecca A. Humphries
Director

Date Approved