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MRR Wetland Alert!

February 14, 2003

Public comment needed on request to fill wetlands to develop ATV trails in Northeast Minnesota. Say “No!” and more to this request before February 23rd.

Background: Lake County, the DNR, and Silver Trail Riders Snowmobile and ATV Club have requested a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to fill wetlands to develop ATV trails. The county, state, and club **have already done significant damage in developing a maze of ATV trails in and around Tettegouche State Park, the Lake Superior Hiking Trail, North Shore State Trail and throughout the Finland State Forest on Minnesota’s North Shore.** MRR recently provided Lake County District Court with copious evidence of this damage. MRR also provided evidence that the local snowmobile/ATV club has been illegally bulldozing area wetlands without permits and receiving public funds to do so for many years. (Photo and other evidence below.)

While the DNR erroneously claimed in an Environmental Assessment Worksheet that 1000 feet of wetlands would be impacted by the proposed Moosewalk/Mooserun ATV trail, MRR provided Lake County District Court with a DNR Hydrologist report finding that 20%, or about 5 miles of the proposed trail crosses wetlands. (MRR Memo of Law, below, p18.)

Now, the county, state, and club is seeking a permit to fill 6.3 acres of wetlands to develop the Moosewalk/Mooserun ATV trail and add 35 more miles to this growing maze. In their request, the county, state, and club also seek forgiveness for “unauthorized wetland impacts” at 30 locations acknowledged and described in the permit request. (Request below.)

It is counter-intelligent to fill wetlands for ATV trails when we are trying to keep ATVs from damaging our wetlands!

MRR members and friends are urged to say “No!” to the filling of wetlands to develop ATV trails and to include the following in your comments to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

- **Oppose granting of a permit to Lake County Forestry request (02-01850-TWP) to impact 6.315 for the purpose of developing the Moosewalk/Mooserun ATV trail.**
- **Request does not warrant, necessitate, or qualify for a permit to fill wetlands.** The amount of fill requested, relative to the project’s **lack of general public benefit** is wholly inappropriate and unacceptable
- **DNR and County have not adequately delineated wetlands in the area. Nor have they adequately examined the environmental impacts that continue to result from development of ATV trails in the area.** This lack of information has already resulted in the local club doing major damage to area wetlands with their publicly funded bulldozers. A state audit recently found that clubs are left to operate largely on their own, that the DNR has operated without adequate data, and has put trail development ahead of environmental review. The audit sites the DNR’s Moosewalk/Mooserun trail of one example of this.
- **Request that the United States Army Corps of Engineers and/or Minnesota Pollution Control Agency hold accountable Lake County Forestry, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and/or the Silver Trail Riders ATV and Snowmobile Club for repair and restoration of damaged resulting from the “unauthorized wetland impacts” at 30 locations acknowledged and described in the permit request.**

Protect our wetlands from unwanted ATV “trail” development. Hold government agencies and local motorized clubs accountable for repairing the damage they are doing with public funds. Mail your comments to the US Army Corps of Engineers, copying the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency before February 23!

Contact and additional information:

- **Lake County Permit request to fill wetlands (see paragraphs 1 and 2):**
http://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/regulatory/mn_ip/20021850.pdf
- To view **photos of wetland damage** done by the local snowmobile/ATV club acknowledged in above request: <http://www.mnresponsiblerec.org/photos/moosewalkphotos/moosewalkphotos5-02.htm>
- To learn more about MRR’s campaign for environmental and public review of ATV trails and about the DNR’s “prototype” Moosewalk/Mooserun ATV trail go to MRR’s website at <http://www.mnresponsiblerec.org/2ndlevelpages/ohvs.htm>.
- To learn about the problems identified in a recent state audit of the DNR’s motorized trail program go to <http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/Ped/2003/pe0301.htm> and <http://www.mnresponsiblerec.org/resources/audit/auditrequestindex.htm>

Mail Comments before February 23rd to:

**Tim Peterson
Regulatory Branch
St. Paul District, USACE
1554 Highway 2, Ste 2
Two Harbors, MN 55616**

**Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Regional Environmental Management Division
Attention 401 Certification
520 Lafayette Rd North
St. Paul, MN 55155-4194**

Please forward...