

ATV and UTV Trail Draft Guidelines Public Comment Summary



The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) was tasked with developing guidelines for construction and maintenance of All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) and Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTV) trails. DNR drafted said [guidelines](#) and held a public comment period to gather feedback on them, from December 8 to December 31, 2021.

Public Input Process

The public input process has entailed an initial public comment period as identified above in addition to work to develop the draft guidelines with public trail providers such as the U.S. Forest Service, Wisconsin County Forests Association, DNR property managers, and the Wisconsin ATV Association. The intent of the comment period was to aid DNR in identifying pertinent issues, topics, and questions that should be addressed in the draft ATV/UTV guidelines and incorporated into the final guidelines. Individuals and stakeholder organizations were informed of the public comment period in a variety of ways including:

- A DNR [press release](#), dated December 8, 2021 announcing the initial public comment period.
- A [web page](#) on which the draft guidelines were posted with information about how to submit comments

Input Received

DNR received 200 comments during the initial public comment period, via the aforementioned form. Comments ranged from both general and specific edits to the draft guidelines, as well as comments outside the purpose and intent of the guidelines. All comments were reviewed, and those relevant to the purpose and intent of the guidelines were considered for inclusion in the final guidelines document.

Public Input Summary

The following summarizes input received during the initial public comment period for this project. The summary is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis of each comment received, but rather to identify prominent themes present in the input. Five major public input themes were identified as follows:

- **Theme 1 – Additional ATV/UTV Regulation and Enforcement**

Approximately a quarter of respondents, including ATV/UTV users, support additional ATV/UTV regulation/enforcement. Examples of additional regulation/enforcement that were identified by respondents include vehicle registration, speed limits, and limitations on vehicle width.

- **Theme 2 – ATV/UTV Use Compatibility and Impact**

Approximately 15% of respondents expressed opposition to/concern with ATV/UTV's sharing trails with snowmobiles or non-motorized users. A slightly smaller percentage of respondents, including those that generally support ATV/UTV use, identified concerns regarding natural resource and environmental protection, including noise/air pollution and the potential for invasive species propagation resulting from ATV/UTV trail construction, maintenance, and use.

- **Theme 3 – ATV/UTV Trail and Route Specifications**

Small percentages of respondents (less than 10%) expressed support for the following:

- More concentrated riding areas, commonly known as play/recreation areas and riding parks
- Wider trails
- Narrower, less-developed, trails so as to provide more technically challenging and slower-speed riding
- Low- or no-gravel trails
- Expansion of road routes
- Restriction of road routes

- **Theme 4 – ATV/UTV Specifications**

Small percentages of respondents (less than 10%) expressed support for the following:

- Allowing for "2-up" riding (two passengers on an ATV/UTV designed for single passengers)
- Allowing for tracked and wider machines on public lands

- **Theme 5 – Generalized Pro/Anti-ATV/UTV Sentiment**

Many comments reflected a generalized support of or opposition to ATV/UTV use and did not focus on the content/parameters of the draft guidelines. **It is important to note that the purpose and intent of the initial public comment period was to gather input on said content/parameters.**

Pro-ATV/UTV comments supported expansion of ATV/UTV use/trails and allowing for other motor vehicles, such as off-highway motorcycles, on ATV/UTV trails and routes (ATV/UTV are defined per State Statute and developing parameters for trail use of any vehicles beyond ATV/UTV is not within the purview of the DNR nor this project).

Conclusions and Next Steps

DNR is committed to an open and transparent project planning process, and the number of comments received during the initial comment period demonstrates a public interest in this project. DNR staff has modified the draft ATV/UTV guidelines to reflect public comment on a number of topics including:

- Invasive species concerns resulting from ATV trail construction/maintenance/use (as identified herein)
- Updates to allowable machine weights to reflect statute changes
- Trail width specifications
- Clarifications regarding wetland and other water resources-related permitting
- Addressing concerns about trail grades (steepness)
- Information about gates
- General housekeeping edits such as typographical corrections

Next steps in this process will be to finalize the guidelines and make them publicly available. When finalized, the document will be available on the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Public Input Opportunities web page: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/news/input/Guidance/FWP>.