



## Policy Recommendations for Managing Off-Road Vehicle Use on Preserved Lands

April 2019

**The Pinelands Preservation Alliance recommends the State of New Jersey adopt the following steps to manage Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) use on preserved lands, in order to provide reasonable public access and enjoyment of public lands while preventing the rampant damage and dangers these lands currently experience due to illegal and irresponsible ORV use.**

- The governor and Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) should publicly state what is and is not acceptable motorized vehicle behavior on state conservation lands, at press events in State Parks and Forests and in a public service announcement. So far, the only public advocates for our state lands are non-profit groups and individual users. State lands need state leaders to be leading public voices for taking care of our state conservation lands.
- The Commissioner should create a clear policy statement on the permitted use of motorized vehicles on State lands and require that all parts of the Department carry out the policy. The policy statement should clearly state that all motorized uses must be compatible with protecting the safety of the public and emergency services like fire fighters, preserving natural resources and habitats, and protecting other, low-intensity forms of recreation on State lands.
- The Department should share the statement of policy with legislators, law enforcement agencies, organized user groups, municipal judges and officials, and traditional and social media outlets.
- This policy should be based on the rules that
  - (a) State land managers shall designate, map and mark those roads that are safe for motorized vehicles and can be assigned to this use without harming natural resources or interfering in other forms of recreation;
  - (b) In the case of each designated road, land managers shall determine the types and intensities of uses it can sustain without becoming damaged or unsafe for drivers and other users, based on experience and any methodology the Department may develop for this purpose;
  - (c) State land managers shall monitor designated roads and mark them as closed, either for all uses or for group uses depending on the circumstances, when road or weather conditions mean that they cannot be driven upon without harming the road or endangering drivers, emergency services, or other members of the public;
  - (d) Motorized vehicles may only be driven on designated and marked roads;
  - (e) Where experience shows it is necessary, land managers may block routes temporarily or permanently in order to enforce the designation of routes for motorized use; and
  - (f) Gatherings of more than five vehicles, whether cars, trucks or motorcycles, require a permit to drive on unpaved roads in State lands.

- The Department should publicly adopt and enforce the Pinelands Commission’s formal designation of the roads permitted for motorized use in Wharton State Forest. In making these designations, the Commission began the process of carrying out its obligations to do so for all state lands in the Pinelands under the Comprehensive Management Plan. That designation is now the law of the land in Wharton State Forest. However, the Department has not taken action to implement and enforce that designation.
- For permitted motorized vehicle events:
  - (a) Permits should be limited to five enduro and three jeep/truck events per year on State Parks and Forests;
  - (b) Permits should only be issued on an equitable basis across all State Parks and Forests, so they are not disproportionately concentrated in the Pinelands;
  - (c) Permit applications for events should be rigorously reviewed for compliance with rules and policies, including Land Management Review of each proposed route;
  - (d) The public must be notified of proposed and final routes via the DEP web site and signs at starting point of each event within the State Park or Forest;
  - (e) Groups receiving permits for large-scale events must pay DEP for the cost of at least three Park Police to monitor the event and one State Park official to survey the route after the event for any trash or damage left behind;
  - (f) Groups should also be required to post a bond with the Department from which to pay the costs of repairing any damage that may occur as a result of an event;
  - (g) Land managers should track events by size, date, route, conditions, permit violations, and impacts on roads.
- Park Police assigned to each Park or Forest should report to and take direction in their daily activities from the superintendent, as the superintendent is in the best position to know where they will be most useful each day.
- DEP should create and carry out a training program for Park Police, Conservation Officers and municipal police on the Department’s policies regarding motorized recreation and how each can best help enforce those policies.
- Park superintendents should be authorized to issue tickets or summons for motor vehicle violations, and the Department should create a corps of personnel who are authorized to write citations and alert Park Police about rule violations, but not to make arrests or carry firearms, in order to affordably supplement the enforcement resources of the Park Police. In some National Parks, for example, there are Back Country Ranger programs which greatly enhance the eyes and ears of the NPS (<https://www.nps.gov/features/colm/virtualtour/section/hard/activity/find-your-calling/backcountry-ranger.html>) These personnel, akin to life guards working at places like Atsion Lake, would help fill the gaps created by having too few Park Police.