

STATE FOREST ATV MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

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The development and implementation of ATV riding opportunities on DCNR state forests is guided by laws and regulations; policies; management plans; guidelines; procedures and public input. Some examples of these guidance sources include:

- ***PA Constitution:*** As a trustee of the Commonwealth's public natural resources pursuant to Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution, the bureau must conserve and maintain the public natural resources for the benefit of all the people, including generations yet to come. The bureau must manage the state forest lands in a manner that conserves and maintains them for all current and future uses as it integrates ATV riding opportunities on these public lands.
- ***State Forest Rules and Regulations:*** Lawful rules and regulations provided under Act 18 for "land which is owned or leased by the Commonwealth and which is administered by the Bureau of Forestry."
- ***Penn's Woods Strategic Plan:*** Penn's Woods provides the critical policies and directions for achieving the long-term health and sustainability of Pennsylvania's forests.
- ***State Forest Resource Management Plan:*** The SFRMP is the primary instrument that the Bureau of Forestry uses to plan, coordinate, and communicate management of the state forest system.

The following principles, as a reflection of these sources, articulate how the Bureau of Forestry will approach ATV management while meeting the department's other duties and responsibilities.

1. **Ecosystem Management:** Ecosystem management can simply be defined as an ecological approach to resource management. This strategy ensures the viability of forest systems can be maintained while concurrently providing benefits to society. An ecosystem management philosophy will serve as the basis for how the bureau plans for and manages ATV riding opportunities on state forest land.
2. **Dispersed, Low-Density Recreation:** State forest lands provide the citizens of the Commonwealth with the opportunity for the types of healthful, dispersed outdoor recreation that can only be obtained from large forested areas. ATV riding opportunities should be compatible with low-density and dispersed recreation on state forest lands.
3. **Sustainable Recreation Management:** The State Forest Resource Management Plan (SFRMP) articulates the need to continually evaluate and manage recreation, including ATV riding opportunities. To sustain the benefits of outdoor recreation for present and future generations, ATV recreation must be a sustainable balance of environmental, social, and economic conditions. Appropriate recreation levels should be identified to ensure conservation of ecological resources and the minimization of user conflicts. Recreation infrastructure must be assessed and monitored for sustainability and maintenance needs.
4. **Compatible ATV Use:** ATV riding is a shared recreational use of state forest land that provides beneficial opportunities for riders to experience the outdoors, while offering economic benefits to local communities. The bureau will explore opportunities to expand ATV riding opportunities in ways that are compatible with other forest uses, values, and ecosystem management.

5. **Managing Impacts:** ATV use can cause environmental and social impacts. The bureau will seek to *avoid, minimize, mitigate* these impacts with careful planning and management.
6. **Anticipating Costs:** In planning for and evaluating ATV riding opportunities, the bureau will assess and consider staffing, budgetary needs, and other resources needed to manage and maintain ATV trails and facilities.
7. **Co-locating Trails:** The bureau will aim to reduce forest fragmentation and new disturbances by co-locating ATV activities when possible, taking advantage of existing linear features, such as haul roads and rights-of-way, and previously impacted areas, such as abandoned mine lands.
8. **Road Use and ATV Trails:** In certain circumstances, sections of state forest roads may serve as important strategic connectors for regional ATV trails. On a limited, case-by-case basis, the bureau may evaluate the benefits of co-locating designated ATV trails on existing state forest roads to achieve regional connections while also weighing impacts to public safety, public access, road maintenance and other state forest users. Widespread or universal use of state forests for ATV trails is not compatible with public safety and other state forest uses and values.
9. **Public Safety:** The safety of riders, employees, and recreational users will be a paramount concern during ATV planning and project development. The bureau will consider the potential timeliness of emergency responders and impacts to local emergency personnel.
10. **Adjacent Land Impacts:** When evaluating and planning for ATV facilities, the bureau will consider potential impacts to adjacent landowners and communities. The bureau will evaluate input from these stakeholders in its planning processes.
11. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Effective partnerships with the ATV community and other stakeholders will be promoted and leveraged to create additional riding opportunities. The bureau will support and partner with other agencies and stakeholders to identify potential land acquisitions, easement corridors, and private land connectors to expand ATV opportunities.
12. **Responsible Use and Stewardship:** The bureau will promote and encourage a high degree of land and trail stewardship; compliance with applicable statutes and rules; commitment to Leave No Trace® Principles; and consideration of other forest uses and values. The bureau will engage and partner with ATV users to promote these values.
13. **Monitoring and Adaptive Management:** The bureau will monitor ATV use and seek to continuously improve and adapt its management guidelines. This approach will include on-the-ground assessments and monitoring of ATV benefits and impacts. The bureau will develop and adapt Best Management Practices for planning and implementing of ATV projects.