

## **Proposed Phase 2 ATV Trail Segment Survey – Itasca County**

### *Survey Results Report - 70-Mile Trail Project*

August 2009

#### **Background**

The Oversight Committee for the 70-Mile Trail Project in Aitkin and Itasca Counties, Minnesota conducted a survey with the objective of gaining information about the perceived impacts of alternative Phase II trail routes in Itasca County.

#### **Survey Description**

The survey was developed to gain information about the level of support for alternative route alignments, concerns about potential impacts, and the degree to which mitigations might address concerns. The survey included 17 questions related to the proposed alignment. A cover letter was included and described the purpose of the survey. The survey was mailed to that target group of property owners with a self-addressed stamped envelope included for returning the completed surveys. Survey responses were coded to track the response rate. Individual responses were not identified and remained anonymous. The complete survey and cover letter are included as Appendix A.

#### **Results**

The mail-in survey was conducted from June 25<sup>th</sup> to July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The survey was mailed to property owners adjacent to the proposed trail alignments in Itasca County. A total of 102 surveys were mailed and a total of 36 survey responses were received for a response rate of 35%.

#### **Demographics Information**

The first few questions within the survey include demographics information.

- 32% of the respondents were between 55 and 64 years old
- 69% of the respondents were male
- 74% of the respondents own property in southeastern Itasca County that is their Primary residence
- 35% of the respondents own property in southeastern Itasca County that is Seasonal recreational property

The respondents were asked to provide information about household recreation activities.

- 82% of households participate in Fishing
- 79% of households participate in Hunting
- 76% of households participate in All-terrain vehicle (ATV) Riding
- 58% of households participate in Camping
- 52% of households participate in Birding/Wildlife Watching

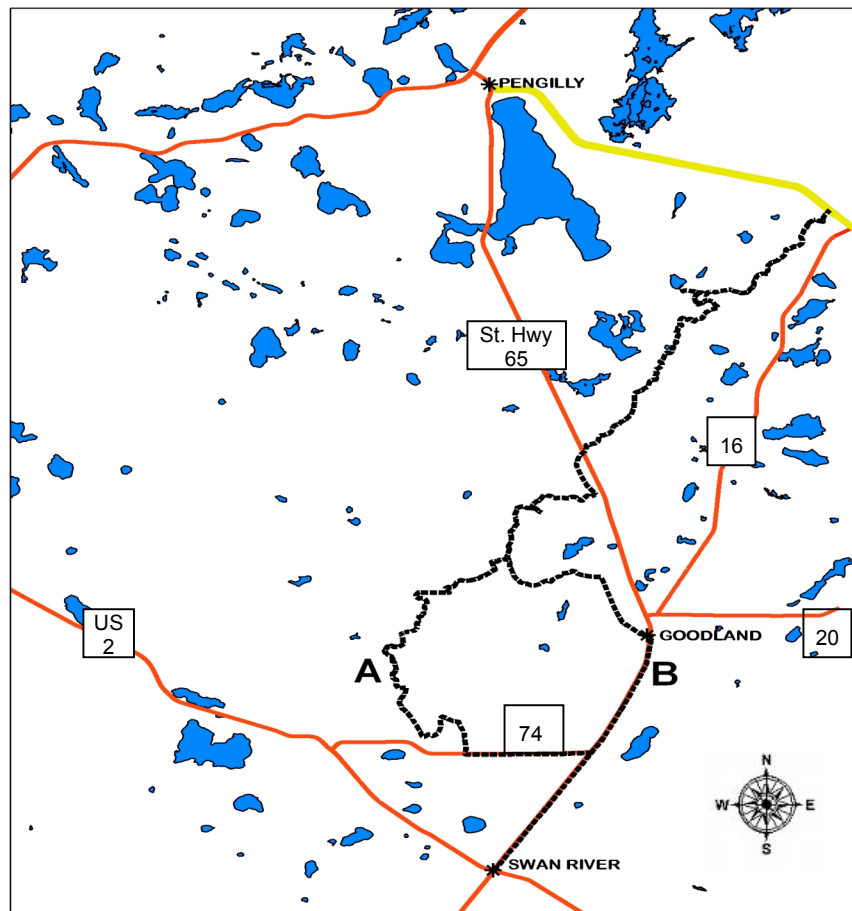
The respondents were asked to identify how they use ATV vehicles.

- 63% of respondents use ATVs for Recreational trail riding
- 46% of respondents use ATVs for Access to public land
- 80% of respondents use ATVs for Farm work/yard work
- 14% of respondents Don't ride ATVs

A total of 39% of respondents indicated they use the existing Pengilly/Alborn trail for recreational ATV riding, while 61% indicated they do not. A total of 32% of respondents indicated they use the existing trail for activities other than ATV riding and these activities included primarily snowmobiling (N = 7) with a smaller number indicating birding (1), hiking (1), bow hunting (1) and dirt biking (1). When asked if they utilize local forest roads and trails for ATV riding, 70% of respondents indicated they do.

All (100%) of respondents indicated they are familiar with the area where the alternative trail alignments are being proposed. The following map (Figure 1) illustrates the location of proposed alternative trail routes A and B.

**Figure 1. Map of Proposed Alternative Trail Alignments**



Approximate Map Scale: 1 inch= 9600ft

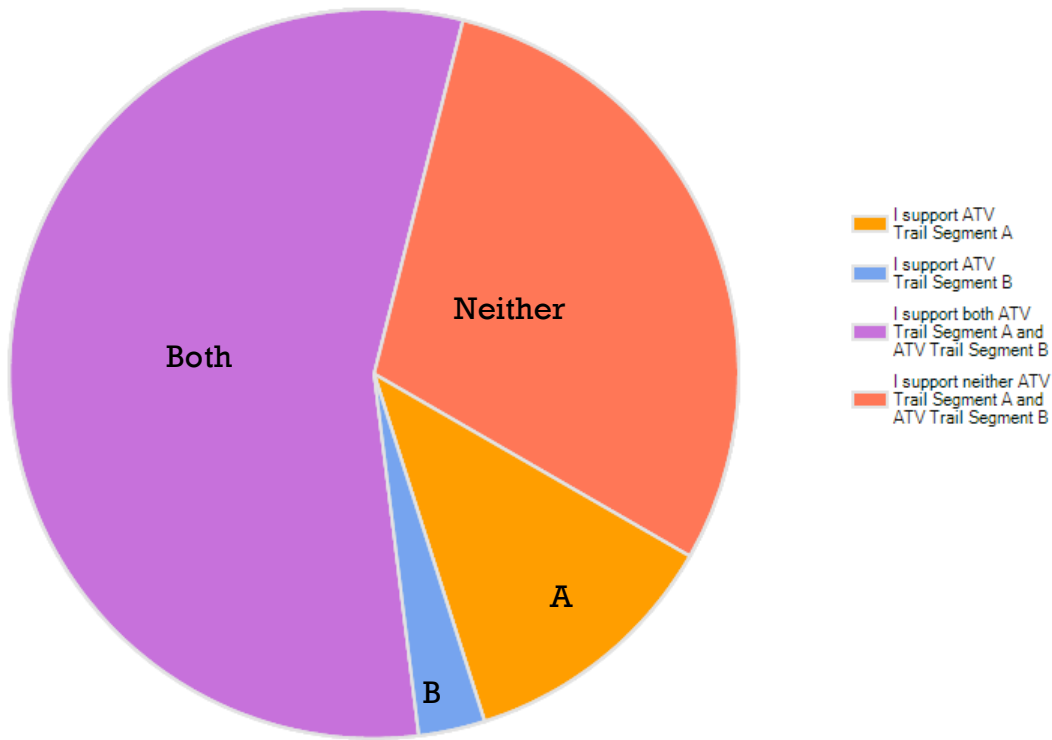
Respondents were asked to identify which (if any) trail segment(s) they support being developed. The results are shown in Figure 2 (next page).

As shown in Figure 2:

- 12% of respondents support Trail Segment A
- 3% of respondents support Trail Segment B
- 56% of respondents support both Trail Segments A and B
- 29% of respondents support neither Trail Segment A or B

**Figure 2. Support for Proposed Trail Segments A and B**

Do you support the development of proposed ATV Trail Segment A and/or B as shown on the above map? (The proposed trail segments are represented by the black dashed lines on the map.)

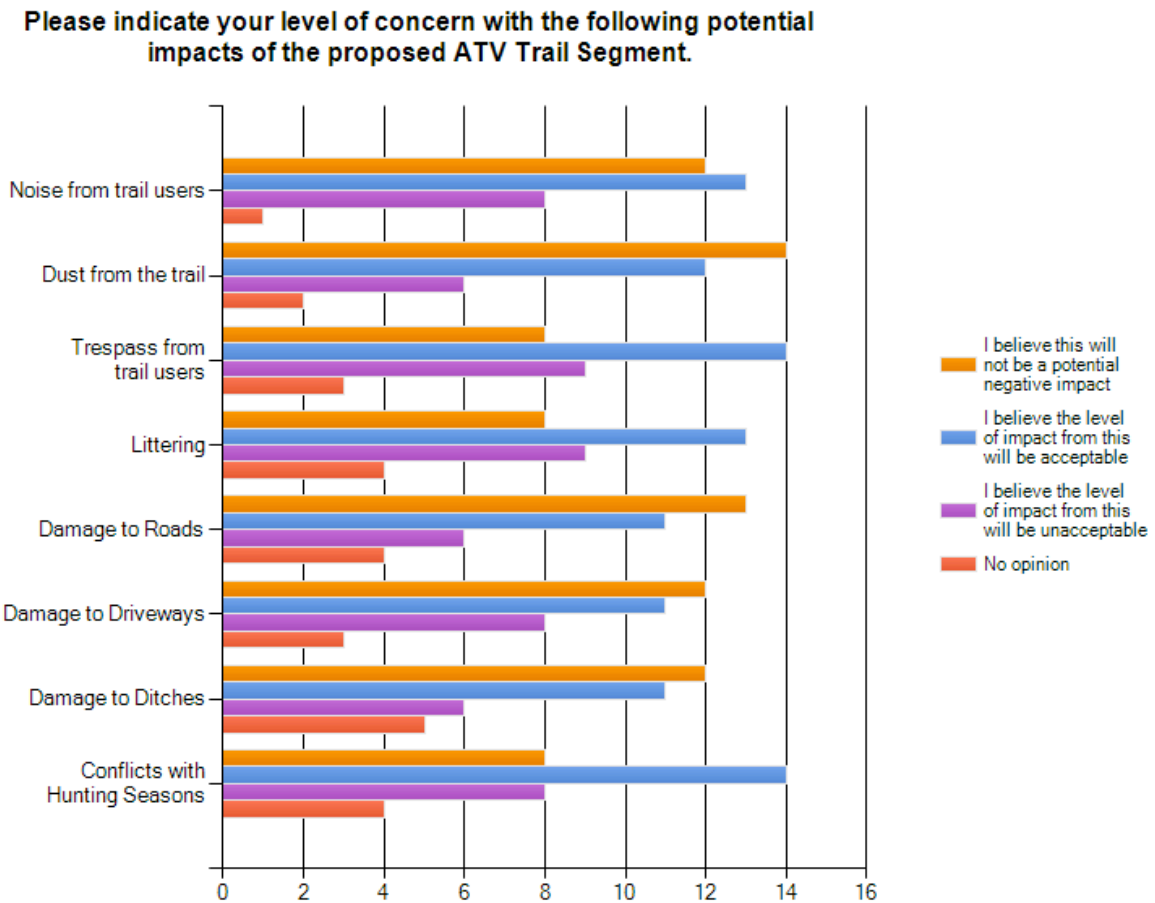


Examples of comments provided to explain the support for selected trail segments:

- Does segment B run on the railroad grade? We're worried about trespassing since it would run by our property. We also horseback ride and concerned about reckless drivers.
- I do not support either ATV trail because I am very familiar with the area and there are plenty of trails that already exist for ATV access.
- Encourage more activities in a little used area, need economic boost in Swan River area
- Segment A would go along County Road 74 which is a busy county road and thus would be more dangerous. Plus along County Road 74 there are approximately 8 homes that would be GREATLY inconvenienced by an ATV trail located so close. Plus an ATV trail through Goodland would provide access to Fred's store for ATVers for refreshments, etc.
- It looks like B runs right along my driveway on the existing snowmobile trail and I already have a dust and speeding problem.
- I would support only non-motorized trails, i.e. hiking, biking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback....
- We need every available trail possible so we can still enjoy owning ATVs.
- We already have enough 4 wheelers in the area with all the logging roads, etc.
- A is nice area to ride in. Area B is all railroad grade.
- It seems A would be a better choice. It looks to be away from residential areas more than B.
- ATV trail segment A along county road 74 would be very disruptive and dangerous for the people that live along it. My experience with recreational ATVers and snowmobilers is that in a lot of the cases they are not respectful to property owners.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their level of concern with potential impacts of the proposed trail segments (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Potential Impacts**



As shown in Figure 3, less than 30% of respondents believe any of the potential impacts (i.e., noise, dust, trespass, littering, etc) would be “unacceptable”.

The greatest concerns were expressed with:

- Trespass (27% indicated the level of impact will be unacceptable)
- Littering (27% indicated the level of impact will be unacceptable)

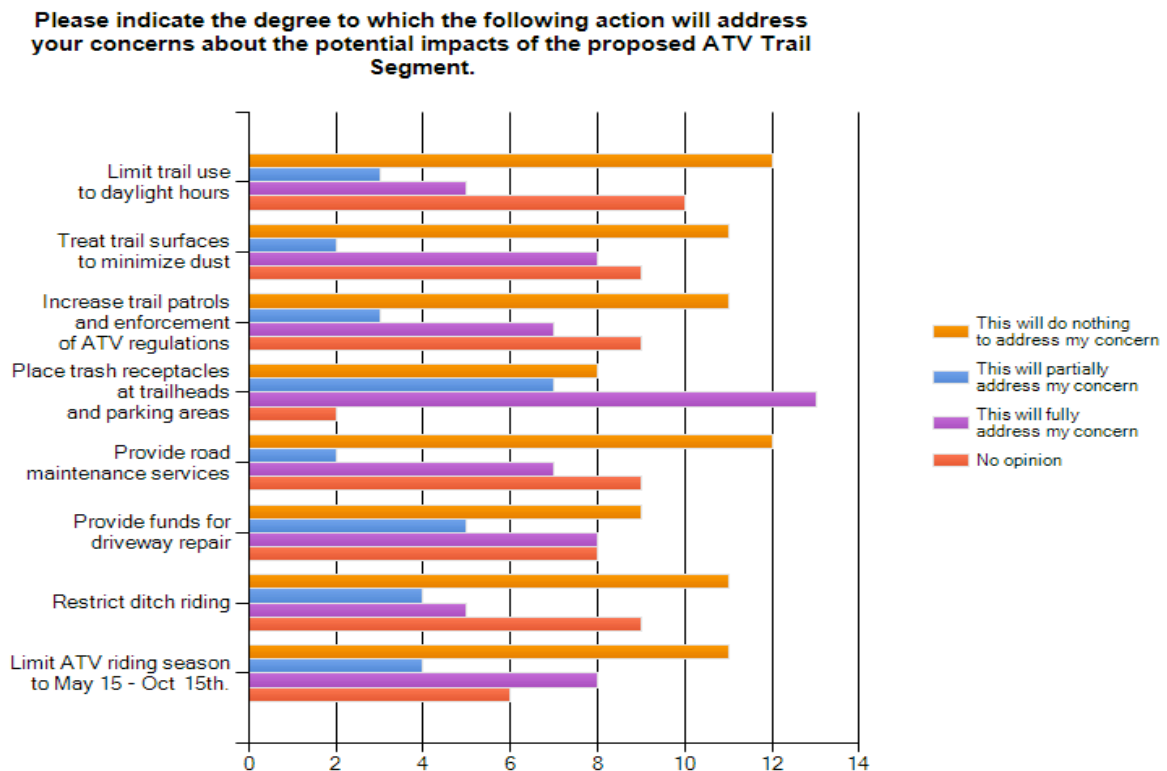
Comments provided in response to the potential impacts included:

- We do not think [ATV riders] will obey rules and may be a danger to walking the trail and our activities on our own property.
- We currently have ATVs coming on property running over plants, etc.
- It would bring in money from Twin Cities to a poor area, good use of poor quality land. Could bring in trail ride business. Must be monitored and maintained to keep out abusers.
- Concerns if trails open to OHV (Jeeps, pickups, 4WD). High speeds and noise from these vehicles.
- I no longer ride on the trails, so the biggest concern of mine is my driveway.

- I believe that there will be numerous negative factors unless there is strict enforcement with severe penalties to those causing danger or damage. If there will be limited enforcement, I am against any money spent on trails.
- Vandalism and break-ins and thefts would increase. This is a remote area with many seasonal places and isolated places that would present opportunities for such activity.
- I would like to see designated areas along the trail such as mud pits, hillclimbs or play areas so people aren't going off the trail to do so. I think it would be a good gathering area, and will help keep landowners and county-state officials less frustrated also.
- Do not allow anyone younger than 18 to use trails without parents. Severe penalties to parents for reckless use of ATVs.
- Speaking from experience, I feel that this trail approval will proceed regardless of the concerns of property owners, and that this survey is just a formality required by law. It's all about money coming into the counties involved. I know that most people are good. Thanks for asking my opinion.

Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which mitigating action could address concerns about the potential impacts of the proposed ATV Trail Segment (Figure 4). As shown in Figure 4, less than 30% of respondents felt that any of the mitigating actions would fully address their concern – with one exception – 43% of respondents felt that their concern about potential impacts (e.g., littering) would be fully addressed by “Placing trash receptacles at trailheads and parking areas.” Between 30 and 40% of respondents felt the other mitigating actions would do nothing to address their concerns.

**Figure 4. Mitigating Actions**



Respondents were asked to describe any other actions that could help address concerns:

- Use 3rd alternative route?
- Develop and support trail clubs.
- Bow hunting season starts earlier than Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>
- No actions would be able to address my concerns over an ATV trail along County Road 74. No matter how many rules and regulations or patrols, etc. there are too many recreational ATVers that are inconsiderate of other people's rights!!!
- If trails aren't open 365 days a year don't bother making them.
- No limits to trail hours, increasing trail patrols will only increase laws against ATV users, Trash receptacles are great idea, keep local homeowners happy by providing funds for driveway repair, restricting ditch riding - just another law we don't need, limiting ATV riding season - once again too many rules and restrictions will just hurt the few rights we still have.
- Put on speed limits. The penalties for anyone entering private property for vandalism or theft should be removed of ATV driving for life.
- Strict enforcement and SEVERE penalties
- Provide monitored cameras to those whose places are in proximity of the trail. Provide locked gates on all roads and driveways that would allow easy trespassing on private properties. Require courses in rules and ethics before issuing permits for ATV trail use. Address problems that occur to property owners quickly, making restitution for damages. Cleaning up litter regularly. Strong enforcement.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the survey provide information to the Oversight Committee for the 70-Mile Trail Project regarding the perceived impacts of the proposed Phase II trail alignments in Itasca County and potential mitigating actions. The results show that route A is slightly preferred over route B. However, 56% support both routes and 29% support neither route. The majority of respondents indicated that the potential impacts included in the survey would not be negative and/or the level of impact would be acceptable. Only the placement of trash receptacles was identified as a mitigation that would fully address concerns about potential impacts. Other mitigating actions were largely viewed as doing nothing to address concerns. Written comments emphasized several specific property owner concerns and potential mitigations. Several respondents identified the mitigating action of monitoring and enforcement and identified concerns about trespass and property damage.

## Appendix A – Survey and Cover Letter

June xx, 2009

«Name»  
«Address»  
«CityState», «Zip»

Dear «Name»,

Dovetail Partners, in cooperation with the Aitkin and Itasca County Land Departments, is interested in understanding preferred alternatives for the development of ATV trails in the area. The information from this survey will enhance the planning and management of ATV and off-highway vehicle trails.

**You have been selected to complete this survey because you own property in the Goodland area.**

We have selected a specific group of people for this survey and therefore, every questionnaire is important.

The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. Please return your completed survey in the enclosed, self-addressed, postage-paid envelope. **You may also go online to complete the survey. The website for the survey is:**

<http://www.dovetailinc.org/content/atv-trail-survey>

**If you complete the survey online, you must enter your unique response code:**  
**«Response Code»**

Your responses and input are very important regardless of opinions. All the information you provide is voluntary, confidential and anonymous.

To ensure that your response is included in the survey analysis, **please complete the survey as soon as possible and before July xx.**

If you have any questions, please contact me at 612-333-0430 or [katie@dovetailinc.org](mailto:katie@dovetailinc.org).

Thank you in advance for your participation in this important project.

Sincerely,

Proposed Phase 2 ATV Trail Segment Survey

**Section 1. In this first set of questions we would like to learn about your household and your recreational activities.**

1. What is your age?

- less than 18 years
- 18 – 24 years
- 25 – 34 years
- 35 – 44 years
- 45 to 54 years
- 55 to 64 years
- 65 to 74 years
- 75 years and older

2. What is your Gender?     Male       Female

3. Which type(s) of property do you own in southeastern Itasca County? (Check all that apply.)

- primary residence
- seasonal recreational property (i.e., cabin or hunting land)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

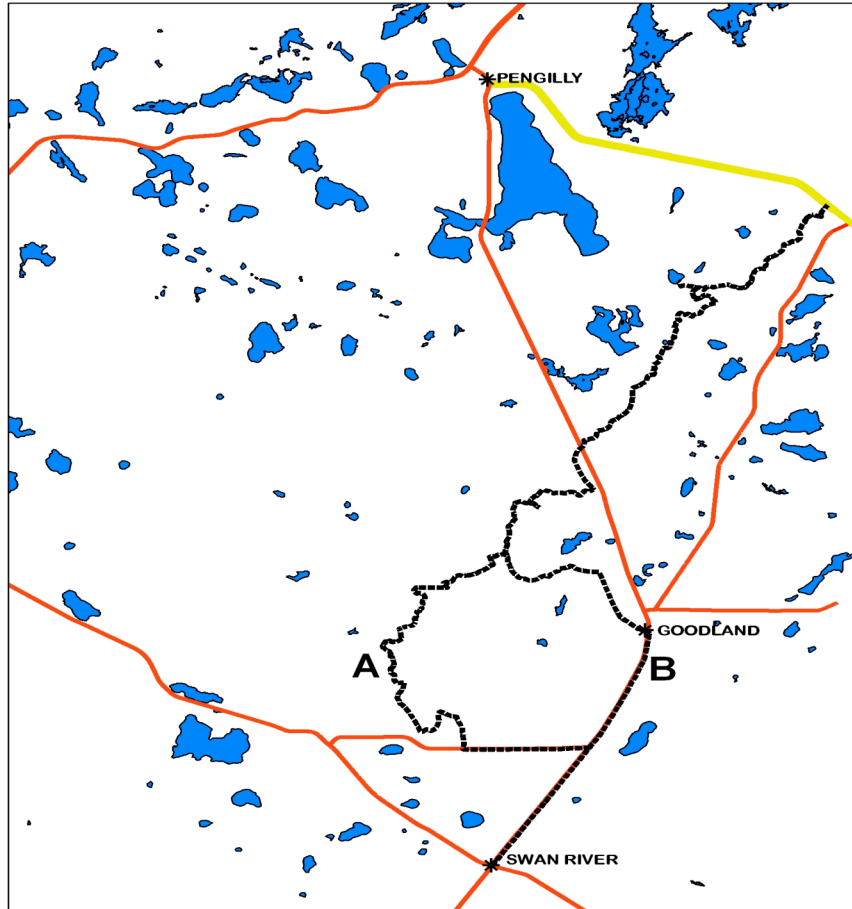
4. Which of the following recreational activities do you or a member of your household participate in at least once per year? (Check all that apply.)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water Skiing                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing/Kayaking         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Snowmobiling                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycling                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Horseback Riding          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Jogging/Running           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boating                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiking                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-County Skiing              | <input type="checkbox"/> Camping                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Downhill Skiing                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Birding/Wildlife Watching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All-terrain vehicle (ATV) Riding | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dirt-Bike Riding                 |  |

5. Do you use All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) for any of the following? (Check all that apply.)

- a) recreational trail riding
- b) access to public land (hunting, etc)
- c) farm work / yard work
- d) I don't ride ATV's

**Section 2. In this set of questions we would like to learn about your experience with the area proposed for the ATV Trail Segment.**



6. Are you familiar with the area shown on this map?

Yes  No

7. Do you support the development of proposed ATV Trail Segment A and/or B as shown on the above map? (The proposed trail segments are represented by the black dashed lines on the map.)

I support ATV Trail Segment A

I support ATV Trail Segment B

I support both ATV Trail Segment A and ATV Trail Segment B

I support neither ATV Trail Segment A and ATV Trail Segment B

8. Please describe why you chose the ATV Trail Segment that you did in the previous question.

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9. Please indicate your level of concern with the following potential impacts of the proposed ATV Trail Segment.

	I believe this will not be a potential negative impact	I believe the level of impact from this will be acceptable	I believe the level of impact from this will be unacceptable	No opinion
Noise from trail users				
Dust from the trail				
Trespass from trail users				
Littering				
Damage to Roads				
Damage to Driveways				
Damage to Ditches				
Conflicts with Hunting Seasons				

10. Please describe any other potential impacts from the proposed ATV Trail Segment that are of concern to you.

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11. Please indicate the degree to which the following action will address your concerns about the potential impacts of the proposed ATV Trail Segment.

	This will do nothing to address my concern	This will partially address my concern	This will fully address my concern	No opinion
Limit trail use to daylight hours				
Treat trail surfaces to minimize dust				
Increase trail patrols and enforcement of ATV regulations				
Place trash receptacles at trailheads and parking areas				
Provide road maintenance services				
Provide funds for driveway repaid				
Restrict ditch riding				
Limit ATV riding season to May 15 – Oct 15 <sup>th</sup> .				

12. Please describe any other actions that could help address your concerns about potential negative impacts from the proposed ATV Trail Segment:

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13. Do you use the existing Pengilly/Alborn trail for recreational ATV riding?  
o Yes o No

14. Do you use the Pengilly/Alborn trail for activities other than ATV riding?  
o Yes o No If Yes, how do you use the trail? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you utilize local forest roads and trails for ATV riding?  
o Yes o No

If Yes, how do you use the trail?

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16. Do you utilize local forest roads and trails for ATV riding?  
o Yes o No

17. Please share any additional comments you would like to be addressed.

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**Thank you for participating in this survey!** Please use the enclosed self-addressed, postage-paid envelope to mail your complete survey to me by July XX. Your responses and input are very important. Please contact me with any questions, Kathryn Fernholz, 612-333-0430