

4 Wheelers

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My husband and I live in a recreational area in central Minnesota. As with most recreation areas throughout the country this means we have many 4 wheelers that are used around us. We have 4 wheelers ourselves that we use to plow snow from our driveway, haul wood from the wood pile to the house and to travel the recreation trails that are in the area. We also use our 4 wheelers during deer hunting season to get back to our deer stands and to help carry the deer out of the woods. I think they are a useful and fun vehicle; however there are so many people that use their 4 wheelers to destroy the natural beauty of our State.

We are fortunate enough to have paths in the acreage behind our home for 4 wheelers. We use the paths to go from one neighbor's home to another and to simply walk in the woods. The wooded area where the paths are located is quite dense and filled with very old beautiful hardwood maples and ash trees. This wooded area is tax forfeited land, so it is owned by the State of Minnesota. There is an agreement among the neighbors that we will all do our part to keep the paths cleared of brush and fallen debris. We have not had rules or guidelines about the use of 4 wheelers on the paths. Everyone used common sense and was courteous of each other as well as nature. Recently our path system was discovered by a group of 4 wheelers that are now using it as a connection from one racing area to another. Due to the noise the racing causes and the damage that these 4 wheelers are doing to the wooded area the department of natural resources has stepped in and banned the use of ATVs in this wooded area. This has been a great disappointment to those of us that were using our 4 wheelers responsibly. When I mentioned this to some of my co-workers I was surprised to hear how many of them thought that all ATV trails should be closed. Many people see these trails as dangerous and bad for the environment. It was amazing to me that they saw the 4 wheelers as a bad thing rather than looking at the irresponsible behavior of those driving them. The woods behind our house is much quieter now. People still use the paths to walk and enjoy nature. The thing that still bothers me is that others are getting the message that 4 wheelers are bad for nature, when the true message is that people being irresponsible is what is bad for nature.