

BWA concerned about proposed ATV/UTV recreational use.

“The Bucktail Watershed Association (BWA) is a concerned group of citizens united to promote wise watershed stewardship for property & stream protection in the Driftwood Branch of the Sinnemahoning and the First Fork”. That sentence is the Mission Statement of the BWA and is the reason the board of directors has decided to oppose any development of ATV/UTV trails or road usage in Cameron County.

The Cameron County ATV/UTV Association, with backing from the Central Mountains ATV Association, is pursuing the use of existing roads and development of connecting trails by which Cameron County would become an integral part of a much larger trail system connecting nearby counties and eventually West Virginia and New York. Expansion of road use and construction of new trails would logically follow. Dirt bikes may also be able to piggyback on any new ATV/UTV expanded riding opportunities.

Fiscal benefits to the county are being touted by ATV/UTV supporters. Cameron County could use a financial infusion but at what cost to the environment and the quality of life of those who value the county’s unique natural assets as they now exist? The many other less intrusive outdoor activities that county residents and visitors now enjoy would almost certainly be negatively impacted by ATV/UTV use.

From the perspective of our local ecosystems’ health, ATV/UTV recreational use has no redeeming value and could be considered the most environmentally damaging recreational activity in PA and must therefore be considered a potential threat to our many high quality and exceptional value waterways, their riparian buffers, and the surrounding landscape in general. The opening of new trails creates freshly disturbed soil that invites invasive plants to become established. Even riding from one infested existing road to another non-infested road could spread invasives. DCNR suggests that machines be cleaned after every ride to prevent the spread of invasives. Many machines seen on trailers travelling locally don’t appear to have had a bath for many miles.

ATV/UTV supporters have stated that an unsubstantiated 2% of riders cause the problems associated with unethical use, equating it to those that violate the motor vehicle code. Regardless of the percentage, it’s a mathematical certainty that the more people operating these vehicles, the more damage they will cause. It’s inevitable. A few minutes of ATV abuse in the field may mean years of natural recovery. The ATV groups admit that violators are a challenge for law enforcement but counter that ethical riders can police “outlaw” riders. We are skeptical of this claim.

As was stated at a recent organizational meeting after a representative from the CCAUA said that we all want Cameron County to remain as “pristine” as it is, “...the mention of those noisy machines and pristine together in a the same sentence is an oxymoron.” So it would seem to us, also.

Respectfully,

The Bucktail Watershed Association Board of Directors

(www.bucktailwatershed.com)