



The mission of the ADIRONDACK COUNCIL is to ensure the ecological integrity and wild character of the ADIRONDACK PARK for current and future generations.

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April 8, 2014

The Honorable Michael A. Tabolt
Chairman, Lewis County Board of Legislators
Lowville, NY 13367

RE: April 12th SNIRT Run

Dear Chairman Tabolt:

The Adirondack Council is gravely disappointed that the Lewis County Board of Supervisors has decided to operate an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) rally (the 11th Annual SNIRT Run) without implementing the necessary changes that would minimize the environmental damage this event has caused in the past. Further, we find it troubling that you continue to allow this event on public highways within the Adirondack Park.

We would also remind the county that operation of ATVs on public highways is illegal, unless roads are properly opened. We believe that Lewis County has violated the provisions of section 2405 of the Vehicle and Traffic Law, and has not fully complied with 2408.

In past SNIRT events, riders have not been confined solely to the event's officially sanctioned roads. SNIRT's rapid and uncontrolled expansion has overwhelmed the capacity of law enforcement, leading to an epidemic of trespassing on both state and private lands. Such lawlessness should be unacceptable to the county's lawmakers.

The Adirondack Council continues to recommend that a formal State Environmental Quality Review be conducted so that officials may monitor the full extent of damage that the event inflicts, both on the region's roads and its natural resources. We strongly disagree with the county's finding that the proposed event qualifies as

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a “Type II” action, citing 6 NYCRR §617.5(15). Rather, §617.4 calls upon the criteria set forth in §617.7(c) in determining whether or not the proposed action will have an adverse impact on the environment. Within this section, the list of criteria lays out series of “indicators” of adverse impact. The SNIRT run meets a significant number of these “indicators” including:

- substantial adverse change in noise levels,
- substantial increase in soil erosion,
- destruction of large quantities of vegetation,
- substantial interference with the movement of any resident fish or wildlife,
- impairment of aesthetic resources of community or neighborhood character, or
- creation of a hazard to human health.

Meeting any one “indicator” qualifies the event as a “Type I” action. While this event may have qualified as a minor event in its first running, the event has grown from roughly 300 participating riders to 3,600. We are confident that this 10-fold increase no longer qualifies as a “*minor* temporary use.” The Council believes that this overdue assessment is a reasonable and necessary step towards improving this event in the future, as it would allow for proper environmental safeguards to be put in place.

The Adirondack Council is not advocating that the SNIRT Run come to an end. However, Lewis County officials must make a serious effort to mitigate the event’s extreme environmental impacts, and to crack-down on the illegal activity. You may recall that the Council recently won a lawsuit against Lewis County for its failure to complete a formal environmental review for ATV trails on county-owned land.

We understand and support the county’s desire to boost tourism. However, we strongly believe that state law calls for events such as this to be carefully planned and strictly supervised to prevent the widespread abuses of public and private property that have been left in the wake of every previous SNIRT event. A lack of attention to these details encourages a culture of wanton environmental destruction, and at worst, simultaneously promotes drinking and driving with reckless disregard for public and private property and the well-being of other riders.

Given the well-documented transgressions of SNIRT riders on video internet sites such as “Youtube.com,” we will be watching closely, documenting the damage done by this year’s event, and contacting law enforcement if we witness illegal activity.

If you have any questions about this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Kevin Chlad
Legislative Director

Cc: Liz Swearingin, County Manager
Richard J. Graham, County Attorney
Michael Carpinelli, Lewis County Sheriff
DEC Commissioner Joe Martens
DMV Commissioner Barbara Fiala
DOT Commissioner Joan McDonald
NYS Police, Troop D

Att: photos taken by the Adirondack Council at the 2012 SNIRT Run



Evidence of abuse illegally made by ATV users crossing a stream



Blatant disregard for traffic control signage



Damage to Whetstone Gulf State Park



Frozen frame of video taken by Adirondack Council showing SNIRT participant crossing a stream