

Broome County Environmental Management Council

Barbara J. Fiala, Broome County Executive • Stacy Merola, Director



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March 19, 2009

Commissioner Carol Ash
New York State Office of Parks
Recreation & Historic Preservation
Empire State Plaza, Agency Building 1
Albany, NY 12238

Re: Opposition to motorized vehicle/snowmobile proposal for Chenango Valley State Park

Dear Commissioner Ash:

The Broome County Environmental Management Council (EMC) a citizen's advisory group to County government writes to express opposition to a plan to allow snowmobile use within Chenango Valley State Park (CVSP). In fact, the EMC is opposed to the use of any motorized vehicles for recreational purposes in the Park's system. The EMC believes that CVSP should allow low impact recreational activities as it has for decades for peaceful natural enjoyment.

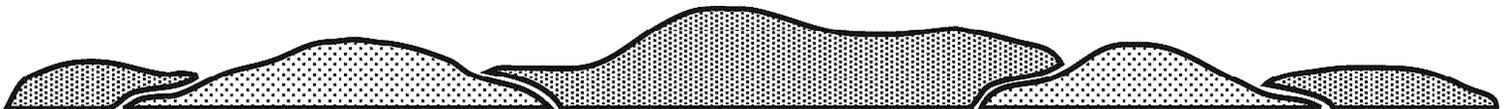
We understand that the CVSP Manager asked the BC Sno-Riders Club if they would be interested in riding on trails that are now generally off limits to snowmobiles and other motorized vehicles. According to the snowmobile organization's website, they were "invited to enhance existing trails and mark designated trails for snowmobile use within CVSP to allow for slow speed use (<25mph) during the winter months".

The snowmobile group "supports the invitation to allow snowmobiling on previously existent double-track trails and the limited development of new trails to allow ingress and egress from the Park to the NYS Snowmobile Trail System". They claim that "the development of a semi-closed loop system within the Park will provide opportunity for new riders to enjoy a safe, moderately easy area to learn how to operate their snowmobiles as well as a launch point for experienced riders who want to venture outside the Park onto the NYS Snowmobile Trail System."

However, Sandy Chapin, current President of BC Sno-Riders, was quoted saying that the Club had not been seeking access to the Park because "it lacks a few things: consistent snow conditions due to its low elevation and access to a broader trail network for more extended tours through the countryside".

The EMC believes that snowmobiles would detract from the natural setting and possibly create safety hazards for other trail users, such as cross-country skiers and snowshoers. Most of the Park has been managed as a setting for wildlife with low-impact uses like hiking and cross-country skiing. Allowing snowmobiles in the park contradicts this low-impact management strategy to maintain the undeveloped portions of the Park as a preserve.

As you may know, the Park is featured on the State's Wildlife Viewing Guide as one of the best places to view wildlife in natural habitats. Noise from snowmobiles has the clear potential to displace wildlife, disrupt breeding patterns, and stress wildlife, at a time when individual energy reserves are at a critical level, not to mention disrupt observers' enjoyment of wildlife. Further, snowmobiles and other recreational motorized vehicles produce 12 to 20 times the emissions of an automobile per gallon of gas, which may have adverse effects on the local air quality within the park.



The EMC is not opposed to attracting more users into CVSP to enjoy all it has to offer, and we are not opposed to establishing stewardships with responsible, trained volunteers to help keep the Park maintained and enjoyable. However, we disagree that allowing large, noisy and polluting recreational vehicles access to the CVSP will enhance it for the majority of users during the winter months.

We ask that you consider precedent set if the request to open CVSP to snowmobiles is granted. Other recreational enthusiasts like ATV riders and motor-bikers may want to be included in the group of additional users of the Park.

According to the latest edition of the New York State Comprehensive Outdoors Recreation Plan (SCORP), the trend for registered snowmobiles has decreased from the 2002-2003 season to the 2006-2007 season (Chapter 3). The report notes that this trend is expected to continue with an additional five percent decrease projected for the future.

We respectfully request that this proposed plan identify how it would minimize impacts to wildlife and conflicts with current uses. The plan should be subject to the State Environmental Quality Review Act and an environmental impact statement that is subject to public input.

If snowmobiles are permitted in the winter, Park users will have their natural experience forever changed and threatened. The trail system in the Park is not extensive or remote enough to accommodate this use without destroying the experience for other recreational users (hikers, bikers, skiers, joggers, walkers, etc).

We strongly advocate for keeping CVSP a natural place to enjoy.

Thank you for attention with regard to this matter.

Respectfully,

André LaClair

(Electronically signed)

Andre LaClair,
EMC Chairman

AGL/sm

cc: M. Boyle, CVSP
Friends of CVSP
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File