March 21, 2016

S.6408-B, Part QQ (Article VII, TED Bill)

Title:
To amend the parks, recreation and historic preservation law, the vehicle and traffic law, the state finance law and the environmental conservation law, in relation to the creation of an ATV trail fund and the use of ATVs.

Statement of Opposition:
This legislation would redefine all terrain vehicles (ATVs) to include significantly larger, heavier, and more environmentally damaging motorized vehicles – raising the weight limit of ATVs allowed on trails and roadways from 1000 to 1500 pounds. The bill would also open the NYS Forest Preserve and NYS Park land to ATV use, and allows for speeds of up to 55mph on roads and highways.

The language proposed in this bill would not only allow more environmentally damaging vehicles on the trails of the Adirondack Park, but would result in an increase in the number of vehicular accidents on trail networks and roadways already opened to ATV traffic.

As ATVs drive on currently designated routes, they also carve new “ghost roads” through sensitive habitat like forests, streams, wetlands, and deserts. Illegally created routes erode and compact soil, destroy plants, degrade wildlife habitat and water quality, and spread invasive species. Wild animals, especially larger mammals like bobcats, deer, moose, and bear are frightened by the sight, sound, and smell of ATVs and will leave an area where use is occurring – sometimes permanently.

ATVs can harm smaller wildlife directly, especially contributing to amphibian mortality during spring migration. They also impact wildlife indirectly by harming habitat and food sources, polluting water and displacing animals from their homes. Erosion caused by ATV abuse can fill streams with sediment choking out popular fish species and harming aquatic plants. Increasing the weight limit and size of permitted vehicles will only exacerbate these impacts.

As New Yorkers, we treasure our public lands as places to hike, hunt, camp, fish and explore with our families. There are fewer and fewer places where people can go to escape the roar of engines and immerse themselves in a true wilderness experience. By allowing larger and more ATVs access to our remaining natural places, we will only reduce the already diminishing amount of acres where people and wildlife can find solitude. New York’s parklands should remain ATV free.

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Strongly Urges Your Opposition of S.6408-B Part QQ