

Governor Blagojevich Uses Veto Pen To Protect State Parks

Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich recently exercised his amendatory veto authority to propose changes in two bills passed by the Illinois General Assembly that would have opened the door for all-terrain vehicle trails through Illinois state parks, and limit the state's authority to police illegal use of ATVs.

We need Sierra Club members to help uphold these vetoes. Dirt bikes, 4-wheelers and other all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) can cause major damage to trails and natural areas, pose dangerous safety threats to riders and bystanders, and produce high levels of noise. Now, ATV riders want these dangerous, noisy facilities built in our state parks. They also want the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to have severely limited law enforcement capabilities, thus counteracting laws that protect people and wildlife at ATV facilities and events.

As Jack Darin, Sierra Club Illinois Chapter Director, stated,

"We applaud Governor Blagojevich for using his veto pen to protect our parks and those who use them from the noise and damage that can be done by off-road vehicles roaring through our woods and prairies."



Senate Bill 1804 would have allowed money from the special ATV fund to be used to build tracks for dirt bikes and four-wheelers in existing state parks. Blagojevich vetoed this dangerous proposal and instead proposed that the funds could be used for new, special all-terrain vehicle facilities only on IDNR lands acquired outside the current park system, in special "recreation areas."

Senate Bill 1521 would have limited the amount of money from the special ATV fund used to enforce existing laws against unsafe off-road vehicle use. Blagojevich disagreed and proposed allowing up to 30% of the funds in the Off-Highway Vehicle Trails Fund to be spent on enforcement of safety laws, as well as administration of the Trails program. As approved by the General Assembly, SB 1521 would have limited spending on enforcement, safety, and administration to 15% annually.

Illegal use of off-road vehicles has caused major damage to many areas in Illinois, including Cahokia Mounds historic site, river levees in Madison County, pristine areas of the Shawnee National Forest, Illinois Nature Preserves, and others.

How ATVs Damage Our Health and Wildlife Human Health Impacts

Scientific research has shown that relatively continuous exposure to sound levels exceeding 70 decibels can be harmful to hearing. ATVs routinely produce 81-111 decibels. This is roughly equal to a rock concert. Persistent noise at these levels can increase heart rate, blood pressure and blood cholesterol, leading to ailments such as ulcers and chronic high blood pressure. Noise from the average motorcycle can be heard from 1 ¼ miles away. Louder engines can be heard from over two miles away. Wildlife Impacts: Like humans, animals can suffer hearing loss from exposure to ATV noise. Long-term health impacts include behavioral changes, and stress related health problems. One study found that small mammals became unusually aggressive and disoriented after exposure to a motorcycle race.

What You Can Do

Please write or **call** your Illinois state Senator and Representative and tell them to uphold the Governor's amendatory vetoes on ATVs – Senate Bill 1521 and Senate Bill 1804.

Rep. Mike Bost	(618)457-5787; (217)782-0387; 632 Statehouse, Springfield, IL, 62706
Rep. John Bradley	(217)782-1051; 257-S Stratton, Springfield, IL, 62706
Senator Leuchtefeld	(618)243-9013; (217)782-8137; 103B Statehouse, Springfield, IL, 62706
Rep. Brandon Phelps	(618) 253-4189; (217) 782-5131; 265-S Stratton, Springfield, IL, 62706
Rep. Dan Reitz	(618) 443-5757; (217) 782-1018; 200-9S Stratton; Springfield, IL, 62706
Senator Gary Forby	(618) 439-2504; (217) 782-5509; M115 Statehouse, Springfield, IL, 62706