

## **Boreas site no place for vehicles**

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The recent Boreas Pond tract acquisition next to the [Adirondacks High Peaks Wilderness](#) is a triumph for state land preservation. But the work is not yet done.

The [Adirondack Park Agency](#) should classify the Boreas Pond tract as wilderness, which will prevent the use of motorized vehicles in the area. Opening the land to motorized usage will help degrade the land and achieve the opposite effect of environmental protection.

Off-road vehicles do lots of damage to the environment. Wild Earth Guardians, a habitat preservation group in the western U.S., states that "off-road vehicles cause an extraordinary amount of habitat degradation and pollution, often in the most fragile of habitats ... off-road vehicles – dirt bikes, ATVs, dune buggies, snowmobiles, jet skis, rock crawlers and new multi-purpose vehicles — are one of the major threats to our wildlands."

These vehicles put engine chemicals and fuels into the ground and air. They help erode streams and damage the landscape, the group says, with "a web of illegal motorized paths and roads."

These vehicles harm tundra, alpine meadows and wetlands. Plus, their loud engines disturb the people visiting these areas on foot, who are trying to experience nature the way it's meant to be experienced — in quiet.

[The Wilderness Society](#), which works to protect our country's wild lands, states on its website that "the noise and pollution from dirt bikes, ATVs and other off-road vehicles adversely affect America's national forests and the plants, animals and humans that depend on these great places. ... The majority of national forest visitors hike, bike, camp or fish, for example. For these visitors, these off-road vehicles can be a source of pollution and loud noise in the very place we go to get away from it all."

Also, and most importantly, ATVs can kill the riders. More than 13,000 people have been killed by ATVs from 1982 to 2014, according to the [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#). About 3,000 of these fatalities were children under the age of 16. In 2014, 385 people were killed using ATVs. In the same year, almost 94,000 ATV-related, emergency department-treated injuries were suffered in the U.S. More than one-quarter of these were kids under the age of 16.

In New York state, children as young as 10 years of age can operate an ATV, with adult supervision.

While ATV and other off-road vehicle riders claim they like the wild, instead they are, in effect, degrading it. And they are putting themselves at risk of bodily harm.

I understand the arguments of ATV and off-road vehicle owners. A [Yamaha](#) commercial on the Internet shows a rider tearing up forested trails, mountain ridges and sand dunes. The vehicles grind through mud, spike up hills and burn by lakes and ponds. It's wild, crazy fun.

I'm not the type of person to begrudge someone their little excitements. However, this is a question of what we value. Do we value the temporary thrill ride over our need for a decent environment, which we all share? We are not separate from nature. We are part of nature. I do not ask the Adirondack Park Agency to designate the Boreas Pond as wilderness for its own sake, but for our sake.

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