**Northcentral ATV Pilot Area Program FAQs**

**Background**

In response to growing ATV purchases, registrations and public demand for more regional trail opportunities, DCNR recently revised its ATV trail policy and lifted the moratorium on new trails that had been in place since 2001. As municipalities and private organizations develop ATV trails and open public roads, the state forest system has the potential to play a role in strategically linking multi-ownership, regional ATV trails that would increase motorized recreation opportunities while linking communities and rural business to larger trail complexes.

Additionally, In XXXX of 2021, the Fiscal Code was passed that directed DCNR to “THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ESTABLISH A REGIONAL AddPILOT

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In Fall 2020, the Commonwealth’s Fiscal Code called for DCNR to “establish a regional pilot program for ATV use on department lands.”

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**How did the Northcentral ATV Pilot Area Program originate?**

The pilot is a way for DCNR to implement its new ATV policy and to comply with the Commonwealth’s Fiscal Code that is established state law.

A 2021 fiscal code amendment (HB 2536) provided that DCNR establish a two-year “pilot program” for ATV use on commonwealth lands to be opened by the 2021 summer riding season and to be monitored over time, with a report due to the General Assembly before December 2023. DCNR may charge a tag fee to users for riding the pilot area, and DCNR will commit to monitoring the project for the two (2) year duration.

**What is the Northcentral ATV Pilot Area Program?**

The ATV Pilot Program is an effort to connect and enhance regional ATV riding opportunities through collaboration with public and private partners. The pilot aims to offer long-distance riding opportunities, contribute to local economies, and maintain the many uses and values of the state forest system.

Townships in Pennsylvania have the authority to designate their roads opened to ATV use through the PA ATV Code. Many have over the last decade, creating separate networks of roads within their townships. In some limited areas, designated state forest roads can provide legal connections between township road networks opened to ATV use. More often these connections require cooperation among state forests, PennDOT, townships and occasionally private landowners.

Sections of state forest roads may serve as important strategic connectors for regional ATV trails on a limited, case-by-case basis. These are being determined with a focus on minimizing the amount of state forest road needed while avoiding/minimizing the necessity of using PennDOT roads to connect to the township roads. In some cases, DCNR is examining snowmobile trails or administrative roads instead of public use roads. Widespread or universal use of state forests for ATV trails is not compatible with public safety and other state forest uses and values.

The use of existing linear features to connect existing ATV riding opportunities is generally preferrable to establishing new ones. DCNR is exploring feasibility of establishing connecting routes between existing ATV riding opportunities, local businesses, and/ or points of interest.

The ATV Pilot Program allows DCNR to sell and issue permit “tags” at fair market value to offset implementation and management costs.

**Where will the ATV pilot take place?**

The pilot is planned for northcentral Pennsylvania. This region of the state has the highest number of legal ATV riding opportunities available considering DCNR trail systems and adjacent township roads. DCNR is currently evaluating and developing, in cooperation with township officials, local legislators, and PennDOT, the best location for the regional pilot incorporating other state forest lands. The pilot is located primarily in Potter and Tioga counties.

**When will it open?**

DCNR is working with municipalities and communicating with legislators and other state agencies to determine an approved route and establish an opening date. The opening date is currently being determined.

**How long will this pilot program run?**

Once it opens, the Northcentral ATV Pilot Area is slated to run until the end of the riding season in 2022.

**Will the Pilot Area be monitored for impacts?**

The Bureau of Forestry is implementing a comprehensive monitoring program that will evaluate the impact of the trail to local communities; ecological values; other state forest users and recreational values; Bureau of Forestry operations, staffing and law enforcement capacity; public safety; and impacts to adjacent public lands and natural resources. The monitoring program will also evaluate the effectiveness of the special permit, the adequacy of funding for continued operation of the trail, and the need for additional education, outreach and trail marketing.

By December 31, 2023, DCNR will publish a report about the pilot project for further evaluation and stakeholder input.

**When will we know details of the ATV pilot?**

DCNR will announce pilot details to stakeholders and the public as soon as route locations and opening dates are determined and finalized. We expect more details to be released publicly later in June.