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**DCNR to open ATV Regional Trail Connector Pilot Area July 16**

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HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) will open an ATV Regional Trail Connector pilot program in the northcentral region of the state that will provide opportunities for riding enthusiasts to traverse many miles of roads opened to all-terrain vehicle use and trails in Potter and Tioga counties.

*“DCNR recognizes the desire of the ATV riding community to be able to travel long distances legally and without interruption and the positive effect such opportunities can have on local businesses,”* DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn said. *“Through this pilot program, we are hopeful to determine the feasibility of strategically connecting regional riding opportunities while also serving the larger community.”*

This ATV Regional Trail Connector pilot program is in response to growing ATV purchases, registrations, and public demand for increased riding opportunities. Through collaborating with public and private partners, the pilot aims to offer long-distance riding opportunities, contribute to local economies, while maintaining the many uses and values of the state forest system. DCNR recently revised its ATV trail policy, which lifted the moratorium on new trails that had been in place since 2003.

*“We recognize the need to be responsible stewards of the state forest lands and DCNR will be looking closely at the impacts of increased use in the pilot area,”* said DCNR Parks and Forestry Deputy Secretary John Norbeck. *“DCNR is aware of its role in connecting ATV trails and we will use this pilot program to determine whether sections of state forest roads may serve as permanent strategic connectors for regional ATV trails on a limited, case-by-case basis.”*

The area will open for use on July 16 and will remain open until Sunday, Sept. 26. The pilot program will also be reopened on the Friday of Memorial Day Weekend in 2022 to coincide with the full DCNR trail summer riding season and incorporate a planned connection to the Tiadaghton State Forest and the Haneyville ATV Trail System in Lycoming and Clinton counties.

The categorization of trail route are as follows:

–208 miles of township roads (currently designated open to ATVs)

–11.8 miles of PennDOT roads (previously not designated open to ATVs)

–11.7 miles of state forest roads (previously not designated open to ATVs)

–1.93 miles of state forest snowmobile trails (previously not designated open to ATVs)

–45.5 miles of existing state forest ATV trails (previously designated open to ATVs)

ATV riders will need to purchase a Regional ATV Connector Pass permit to use the designated PennDOT and State Forest ATV Connector Roads, the cost of which will serve to offset implementation and management of the program. Permits for the remainder of the 2021 season will cost $20 for Pennsylvania registered ATVs and $30 for non-Pennsylvania registered ATVS. Full 2022 season permits will cost $40 for Pennsylvania registered ATVs and $60 for non-Pennsylvania registered ATVs.

Permits will be available for in-person sales only between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays at Tiadaghton, Susquehannock or Tioga State Forest district offices beginning Wednesday, June 30.

Permit applications will be accepted by mail beginning the same date by sending a properly completed permit application form available on DCNR’s website to Penn Nursery, 137 Penn Nursery Road, Spring Mills, Pennsylvania 16875. Permits will be processed according to the date they are received and will be postmarked within three to five business days of receipt.

Though the pilot areas will be marked, riders will be expected to familiarize themselves with the portions of road and trail that are open to ensure they are operating in the legal areas. The official pilot area map.

DCNR will be gathering public input throughout the two-year period through a variety of methods, including webinars, surveys, comment cards, public meetings and advisory committees. To comment on the ATV Regional Trail Connector pilot program, please send an email to: RA-NR-ATV-Pilot@pa.gov

To gauge the impact of the ATV pilot, 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 trial, and the need for additional education, outreach, and trail marketing. DCNR will publish a report about the pilot project for further evaluation and stakeholder input by December 2023.