
Landowners disgruntled thanks to reckless riders

Dear Editor:

About 30 years ago as I was running on a snowless snowmobile trail in the county forest, I came across an operation to fill a wetland for "improving" the trail. I reported this to the Corp of Engineers, after which the local warden told me there was nothing he could do because "snowmobiles are the 'sacred cow' in Vilas County." The fill was, however, removed.

We currently own and manage woodlands, and cooperate with snowmobile trails on two of these. A Land O' Lakes property is a Forest Legacy easement project using the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program, open to and widely enjoyed for public foot uses.

The property has over a mile of snowmobile trail on which our cooperation and patience has been severely tested.

Last winter we experienced a long series of snowmobile trespass. I imagine a reader will easily dismiss this with a "what does that harm?" That same person will not plow the packed ice roads for us in preparing for a late winter timber sale, or replant

the young conifers snapped off by a careless rider.

Our Conover property, not even near a trail, is continuously abused by snowmobilers with no regard for private property rights. We are nearing wits end of patience for this reckless nonsense and wondering if we should shut down all this cooperation, including a trail crossing our timber parcel near Lake Gogebic. I do wonder how many other landowners are experiencing this abuse?

I am deeply offended by this activity as I have worked for years on conservation solutions with public access for traditional forest uses.

In this era of loose talk defaming public lands as we experience hyper forest fragmentation on private lands, it is time to reconsider what is the "sacred cow."

As the landscape suffers further fragmentation, habitat suffers as well. Also, will the access to these motorized trails become endangered with more reckless riders and more disgruntled landowners wondering how long they should be disrespected.

Joe Hovel
Conover
