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Vinton County CVB Opposes APV Trails in Zaleski State Forest

The Vinton County Convention and Visitors Bureau opposes the efforts of ODNR's Division of Forestry to develop a trail system for all purpose vehicles (APVs) in Zaleski State Forest.

Zaleski State Forest is known for its quiet, peaceful trails and is beloved by the many visitors we receive annually who come to hike, bike, and ride horseback. This new proposed APV trail system cuts through the backpacking trails multiple times; comes very close to the horse trails; goes through the village of Zaleski; and intersects the nonmotorized Moonville Rail Trail. There is no doubt that the noise pollution created will spoil the enjoyment of using our many miles of existing hiking, biking, and horse trails.

As locals know, APV riders are apt to take their vehicles down any open trail or road, regardless of signage or barriers. We already face these problems on abandoned township roads, logging roads and paths on private property, and down our hiking trails. The county's Moonville Rail Trail, to which ODNR has graciously granted hundreds of thousands of dollars, would be a prime target for such riders. The Division of Forestry already does not have enough rangers to patrol the area effectively. A dedicated 51-mile APV trail system will surely need regular maintenance to prevent erosion and damage to the surrounding forest.

The Vinton County CVB does wish to express that an APV trail system aligns with our tourism goals and existing recreational assets. We support the concept of an APV trail system, but not in the proposed location of Zaleski State Forest. We firmly believe Vinton Furnace State Forest is the ideal location for such a trail system. In fact, we wrote a letter in support of such a trail system in January 2017. Vinton Furnace State Forest is largely composed of reclaimed industrial land and is not typically frequented by the same types of visitors as Zaleski State Forest, as there are fewer hiking trails and natural attractions. Additionally, many miles of unauthorized ATV trails already wind through Vinton Furnace. It gets the most use during hunting season, making it an ideal location for APV use during tourist season. Finally, its location closer to the center of the county would create opportunities for businesses to expand and open, instead of compressing everything into the Zaleski area. Our lodging facilities there are already at capacity during tourist season; there is not room for any significant growth.

Residents and local businesses alike understand that if APV trails are to be incorporated into Zaleski State Forest, we will in effect be trading quiet visitors for much noisier ones, with no significant impact on the local economy. The Convention and Visitors Bureau is currently marketing Vinton County as a destination for outdoor recreation and looks forward to adding

safe, legal APV trails to our list of attractions—but only if they are located in Vinton Furnace State Forest.