

My name is James Ratino and I am the President of Maryland Off-Highway Vehicle Alliance (MDOHVA). I have been volunteering as the President of this organization for over 5 years advocating for sustainable public and private Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) and multi-use recreation areas. It has given me the honor of meeting with legislators, like the fine sponsors of this Bill, riders throughout the State, and landowners. Once this legislation was submitted, I began consulting with our members and member organizations, and they support this Bill.

Throughout these years I have had the privilege of seeing the hard work the individuals at DNR put into developing Wolf Den Run State Park and Saint John's Rock, Maryland's only 2 ORV facilities. These two facilities would not exist without the initial passing of the Title Tax fund Bill in 2017 that fund the creation and maintenance of trails. I have also seen how general DNR funding does not always expand to enough to allow the general facilities and infrastructure to be fit out to accommodate these places. This Bill will address that.

This Bill creates an extremely novel approach, by allowing ORV enthusiast to be the only users group in Maryland self-funding their access. From the trails to the parking lots and campgrounds, this Bill will give DNR the funding and flexibility to fully fit out an ORV centered facility. Furthermore, this will cover the cost to ensure the public is aware of where they can legally enjoy their ORV, and be given the know-how to do so safely and sustainably; and allow diversity outreach efforts to non-English speaking families and riders.

We have also been following the demand for ORV access, and since COVID that demand has sky rocketed. Since Wolf Den Run SP has opened it has seen over 10,000 multi use-visitors. This include not just motorized recreation, but hiking, biking, hunting, and bird watching, without conflict, that have added approximately 2.5 million dollars annually to Maryland's outdoor economy. To help meet that demand and help achieve the 40% conservation goal by 2040, this legislation will allow DNR the ability to open private lands for public use. A model utilized in States like Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Virginia - to name a few. That will increase public recreational access on properties like those primarily used for activities like logging, while contributing to MDs land conservation efforts. Expanding not just ORV recreation, but multi-use recreation as well.

On behalf of MDOHVA, the over a dozen Maryland ORV specific clubs and organizations that support MDOHVA, with their over 13,000 members, we support this legislation.