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The Honorable Regina Birdsell, Chairwoman  
Committee on Transportation  
New Hampshire Senate, LOB 101  
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Madame Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 1188, legislation establishing a commission to study OHRV use in the state.

The Forest Society does not host ATV trails on land that we own, due to the damage they can cause to the soils and root systems that enable tree growth as well as to the network of hiking trails on our properties. However, we also recognize the increased use of OHRVs are viewed as an important part of the State's tourism economy, especially in the North Country.

This growth has raised concerns among other groups regarding the effect the increased use is having on landowners living near popular trails in addition to those to natural resources. Unfortunately, the disagreements between users and non-users over those issues is not serving either side well. Given these on-going conflicts, we believe now is the time for the State to initiate an overarching review of the OHRV system. The passage of this legislation will accomplish that step.

In our view, it is possible to find common ground among all of those with a stake in this discussion, including OHRV enthusiasts, landowners, communities impacted by OHRV activity, other non-motorized recreationists who use trails, and communities and businesses seeking the economic reward of hosting OHRV trails.

Reaching this common ground will require good planning, ongoing effective communication among a wide variety of interested stakeholders, effective education of OHRV riders, a process for resolving specific conflicts when they arise, and visible law enforcement. We support HB 1188 because it will establish the framework that we believe will lead to those outcomes.

Thank you again for this opportunity to express our support. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Matt Leahy, Public Policy Director  
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests