



# Hoosier National Forest Highlights



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## Did you know it's illegal to ride ATVs on the Hoosier?

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Going out for a spin on your 4-wheeler? Just make sure you don't do it on the Hoosier National Forest or you might get a ticket! All-terrain vehicles (or ATVs) are prohibited on the Hoosier National Forest. The Forest Service considers all-terrain vehicles (or ATVs) to include four-wheelers, motorcycles, dirt bikes, mopeds, dune buggies, scooters, segways, golf carts, six-wheelers, and other motorized all-terrain type vehicles. Basically any type of motorized vehicle, smaller than a car or truck that does not have a state-issued license plate. However, riding on county roads in Crawford, Dubois, Jackson, Lawrence, Martin, Orange, and Perry Counties is permitted.

Forest Managers have struggled with this issue for a long time. The ban on the use of these vehicles on the Hoosier has been controversial since the 1970's. Illegal riding has become a problem in all areas of the Forest. Often illegal riders have created their own roads and trails through the Forest. Forest Law Enforcement officials are cooperating with local law enforcement to identify and ticket individuals who are riding illegally. Illegal riders can be fined up to \$375 and have their vehicle impounded.

Illegal riding on the National Forest also costs the taxpayers thousands of dollars in rehabilitation costs each year. Riders seeking to create a fun and challenging course often pick the steep climbs and muddy stream crossings. The treads on ATV tires are good for navigating these areas but also cause increased erosion, creation of mud holes, and exposed tree roots. This type of damage is expensive and time consuming to repair. One example is the German Ridge Trail in the southern part of the Hoosier. This area is greatly impacted by illegal ATV riding. The extensive system of user created trails has caused severe erosion and sedimentation. The number of illegal trails and continued illegal use of the trails makes it difficult to begin repairing the damage. Law Enforcement Officer Lafayette Chamberlain stated that, "we can't begin to fix the problems until the illegal riders are gone."

Scientific studies and the Forest Service have identified unregulated off-road vehicle use as one source of major detrimental impacts on national forests. Studies have also shown that ATV use contributes to the spread of nonnative invasive plants. When riders pass through an area they carry seeds from other places they have ridden. Some of these are from plants that we do not want to grow on the Forest.

The Hoosier National Forest provides many uses. Visitors can use their national forest to hike, bike, horseback ride, camp, hunt, watch wildlife, view scenery, rest, rejuvenate, and many other things. One of the things you may not do in the Hoosier National Forest is ride all-terrain vehicles or ATVs.

There are some areas where you can ride without a problem. For instance, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources sanctions the Redbird State Riding Area in Dugger, Indiana. Haspin Acres in Laurel, and Badlands Off-Road Park in Attica are other areas available for riding. Closer to home the Lawrence County Recreational Park, Inc. offers 60 miles of trail for novice and experienced riders. Take advantage of these opportunities to ride and you'll come home having had a good time without getting a ticket.

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ATV riders detour around mudholes created new trails and additional resource damage.



ATV tires in a "play area" churn up mud and cause extensive damage.