



# Hoosier National Forest

## Highlights



Contact: Teena Ligman  
812-275-5987, tligman@fs.fed.us

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### **Environmental Degradation on the Hoosier Caused by All Terrain Vehicles**

By: *Chalonda Jasper, Soil Scientist, Hoosier National Forest*



The Hoosier National Forest is an exceptional place that offers many recreation opportunities from camping to fishing or wildlife viewing. However, the use of all terrain vehicles (ATVs) on the Hoosier is PROHIBITED!!! This means NO four-wheelers, motorcycles, dirt bikes, mopeds, dune buggies, scooters, segways, golf carts, six-wheelers, or any other motorized vehicles are allowed off roads.

Though several counties allow ATVs on county roads, if one is caught riding off county roads on Hoosier National Forest land, riders can be fined up to \$375 and have their vehicle impounded. Users should check the rules for areas they plan to ride. Forest enforcement officials continue to work with local law enforcement to identify and ticket these individuals.

The environmental damage from ATV use is well documented. The illegal use of ATVs causes a network of unplanned trails throughout the Hoosier. Riders seeking to avoid wet, poorly drained soils create excessive detours resulting in widened or additional trails.

The most obvious impacts to a casual observer are to soil and vegetation. Research has shown that virtually all types of soils are vulnerable to ATVs and some require centuries to recover. When vegetation is destroyed by ATV traffic it increases the soil's vulnerability to erosion and compaction. Bare soil lacking vegetation is easily eroded. Soil compaction caused by ATV use creates mud holes and ruts that alter the natural water flow patterns and increases erosion.

Increased erosion can produce runoff and sediment movement into streams, damaging aquatic species and their habitat. Some impacts include the loss of important or sensitive aquatic habitat, decrease in fishery resources, and changes in fish migration. In addition, some ATV users ride through streambeds. Driving through a streambed

crushes aquatic life, leaves streams unsuitable for spawning, and deprives fish of oxygen.

ATVs have also been cited as a key source in the spread of non-native invasive plants. Invasive plants can alter an entire ecosystem and lead to local extinction of sensitive plant species. This can be caused after one pass of the ATV.

ATV use has led to significant environmental damage on the Hoosier National Forest! We are currently surveying impacted areas for rehabilitation. The extensive number of illegal trails and continued illegal use of current roads and trails make it difficult to begin repairing the damage. Consequently, the rehabilitation costs taxpayers thousands of dollars each year. Preventing ATV damage from occurring is key!

The Hoosier is continuing targeted patrols to reduce illegal ATV use and the damage that can result. Many users have been caught but there are more out there. What can you do about illegal ATV users? **REPORT ILLEGAL ATV ACTIVITY!!!** You can remain anonymous. Contact Forest Service Law Enforcement Officers at the Brownstown (414-232-8313) or Tell City (414-232-8093) Ranger Districts to report incidents.

Where can you legally ride in Indiana? Some authorized riding locations are: (1) Lawrence County Recreational Park; (2) Redbird State Riding Area in Dugger, IN; (3) Haspin Acres in Laurel, IN; and (4) Badlands Off-Road Park in Attica, IN. Go to <http://www.riderplanet-usa.com/> to check out more areas where you can ride without a risk of a fine.

For more information contact Chalonda Jasper at (812) 275-5987.

## Soil Disturbance from ATV Riders



Unplanned trail, detour route, removed vegetation, displaced surface soil, deep ruts, mud holes, and compaction are evident.



Unplanned road widening, removed vegetation, displaced surface soil, moderate ruts, mud holes, and compaction are evident.