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Via email (Michael.Klass@osi.nh.gov)
Micahel A. Klass
Principal Planner
New Hampshire Council On Resources and Development

Dear Mr. Klass and Members of CORD

I am a 75 year old retiree who enjoys recreational hiking. I have lived in Columbia NH for 20 years. This brief submission is in opposition to the continuance of the Kelsey Notch ATV Trail in the Nash Stream Forest.

On Sunday, August 16, 2020 I hiked the Kelsey Notch ATV Trail through the Nash Stream Forest. I was surprised to find no trail at all. Instead the ATV route is now a virtual two lane gravel highway constructed with untold thousands of tons of imported aggregate, gravel, and rip rap. Heavy ditching has been done on both sides of the road and the terrain has been substantially altered with what must have been very heavy road construction equipment. Evidence of recent activity by heavy tracked equipment and excavators on the roadway and shoulders was clearly visible in the Nash Stream Forest portion of the Kelsey Notch ATV "trail." Was this construction project actually supervised or managed by the State? Was an alteration of terrain permit for this construction project through the Nash Stream Forest required? I hope CORD has the answers to these questions.

Notwithstanding recent rains, fine dust was seen on the leaves of bushes and shrubs on either side of the road; and when ATV's passed us the fine dust particles thrown up were in such abundance that we had to turn away and cover our faces to avoid coughing and choking on it. When we finished the hike, I was covered with fine dust. This was not the Nash Stream Forest that we had all hoped to have preserved in perpetuity. I will not return for a hike through that portion of the Nash Stream Forest as long as its current ATV use is allowed.

On the east end of the ATV road through the Nash Stream Forest there is no gate at all. A road is currently being built on the Bayroot LLC property abutting the Nash Stream Forest on the east and that road directly joins the ATV road. Cars, trucks and other vehicles can easily enter the Nash Stream Forest on this roadway at will and there is no barrier gate or signage warning against use of the ATV road by other vehicles. The only sign is an upside down 35 mph road sign with a green ATV symbol stuck over it. On the steeper hills, a few flexible water bars have been installed but some are obviously ineffective to divert water--having been run over and become part of the road bed. There is also evidence of erosion of silt and aggregate in the ditches on either side of the road.

In my layman's view this provisional Kelsey Notch ATV highway should not be allowed to continue in existence under CORD's guidance and the plain meaning of its mandate from the NH General Court. In RSA 162-C:6, the General Court explicitly recognized that:

"the land conservation investment program was undertaken, in part, with significant donations of cash and land value by citizens of the state who intended that the conservation value of these lands be protected in perpetuity." RSA 162-C: 6.I (Emphasis added.)

In that vein, the General Court explicitly requires that:

"The council shall manage the lands acquired under the former RSA 221-A so as to preserve the natural beauty, landscape, rural character, natural resources, and high quality of life in New Hampshire." RSA 162-C: 6.III. (Emphasis added.)

To any layman, this northern portion of the Nash Stream Forest is no longer a State Forest in conservation. Its natural beauty, rural character, natural resources and high quality of life have not been maintained. It is now a dusty commercial highway and it is well on its way to becoming a corridor for the passage of all forms of commercial traffic—not just ATVs. The northern section of the Nash Stream Forest has now been divided and fragmented. It has become an unfriendly place for wildlife habitat--let alone hikers of any age. I am not an environmental expert in these matters. I can only describe what I saw, so I will let the pictures at the end of this document speak for themselves. They were all taken on Sunday, August 16, 2020.

Sincerely,

Bob Baker

The Kelsey Notch ATV Trail or Highway?



Drainage ditch with erosion and dust



Ineffective Water Bar



New Gravel covering Erosion



More erosion covered with new gravel spilling into ditch

