

VERBAL TESTIMONY SUBMITTED AT
2/1/18 PUBLIC HEARING

Overview and Public Informational Hearing

Frozen Ground Only Motorized Vehicle Access To Chippewa County Forest
Tealey Creek Game Loop
Sections 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, T32N R7W, Town of Birch Creek
February 1, 2018

Larry Braden, 20725 175th Street, Cornell, WI 54732

My name is Larry Braden. I've lived though in the Mud Brook area since 1941..I was born and raised there. And, we had a farm over there and....but anyway, as we grew up...in 1972, I bought the farm from my folks. And we hunted all that country...south and north, and we didn't go all the way up towards Flaters but we stayed away from that because they came... hunted that too. We respected that and they respected us.

Then they put the road in and I don't know if it was the 1980's or what it was....but we always hunted that and I was one to take off hunting or just go hiking through the forest up there and I would hit that circle and go all the way around... up by the Mud Brook and back around.

I'd do that 3-4 times in the winter and I would follow the deer trails...seen what the deer are doing so I know what the deer are doing in Chippewa County over there, you know and.... so....I could hike, and it never bothered me and I had some brothers sometimes, or cousins go with me or I just went alone. Now that I'm older, like I say I'll be 77 in June and I just moved away from that by Cornell last October, but I'm still gonna be up in that area because I love it and.....seeing as we get older, we would like to drive in there. It's just like Ruby. I don't get over there much.... I've hunted over there and drove some of that but now we have to get access to go in there with vehicles and now I do, when I go up there, I see anything on the road.... anything left by anybody, I usually got a bag of something, I pick it up and throw it in my truck. I do that on the ATV trails or if I'm on the snowmobile trails, I don't snowmobile, but I always pick up rocks, sticks, whatever, and clean the trail just for something I like doing. I feel that as we get older, we would like to drive in there, whether by myself or my wife, she cannot hike like that, you know, but we would like to be free to go in there and have anybody else to use it and respect it. That's how I feel about opening up the gates.

Thank you.

Sonny Gygi, 25800 266th Street, Holcombe, WI 54745

My name is Henry Sonny Gygi. I live at 25800 266th Street, Holcombe, WI, in the township of Birch Creek. There's a couple of things I want to highlight here, and no disrespect to you Mike, you gave some information here that isn't quite correct because you weren't here when this was all put in.

So, I want to give you a little history on this road. When that road went in there, a lot of people were upset. Nobody knew why. We couldn't find out who paid for it, who authorized it. So there was a meeting called. That meeting was held down on the end of the Maxfield Road. The guy that handled the meeting was Henry Anderson, a County/State forester. The people there asked him a lot of questions. Nobody ever got a straight answer. I finally asked Mr. Anderson, I said: "Why was that road put in there?" The road when they put that in, you could have ran four cars abreast in there. When I asked Mr. Anderson why that road was put in there, I'll quote him. He said: "So the deer could get around." Can you imagine that?

We started driving that road in the wintertime. We drove it for years. No problems. I go up there one day and there is a paper sign posted there that said "No Motorized Vehicles". I called the guy on the County Board and told him what I had viewed. He called me the next day and he said those signs will be down. After that then, who preceded you? Doyle Richards, he got an ordinance passed and I have a copy of that, and I am certainly sure you do too, that said no motorized vehicles. Went through the County Board and up went the gates.

But the snowmobile trail that you pointed out tonight, Mike, that wasn't where it was back then. And Mr. Braden will verify to this, it came out of the east end of the Big Meadow. They put a bridge in there and then they got on the very road that we're talking about that said no motorized vehicles. And from there, some of the 4 wheelers started running it. Here again, we are talking about no motorized vehicles, but there seems to be some exceptions.

I walked a portion of that a year ago last fall, and that snowmobile trail has been changed. They're not running as much of that Tealy Creek Road as they did at one time. And I think the closure of that is unfair.

I don't care if you trap weasels, if you trap beaver, if you trap bobcats, if you hunt coyotes, that is our ground that is owned by our people.

Without a doubt, all that work that was done in there that was uncalled for was done either with taxpayer money or money that came from licensed sales, or whatever, but we never could get an answer to that.

The only people that benefited out of that road was the loggers. When the County had a timber sale in there, the logger no longer had to put a road in there. The loggers had already put a road down to the Big Meadow and from there on, they had a road. No fee, no charge, no expense to them. But the general public couldn't use it. I think it has been very unfair.....there's going to be no damages....Mike has stated the Ruby issue has worked out great. There's been no problems.

We got a bunch of hunters sitting back here... I know some of them. In fact, Mike, right there, Mike Tanski(?) and I were on the Buckhorn Trail not too long ago and here's a pile of garage. It was kind of humorous. They must have opened....either had the back of a pickup open or the back of a trunk of a car. One threw it on the right and the other threw it on the left side. There was even 6 packs of beer that were full that they threw out. Tim got on the phone, we called the warden but he was on the vacation, so they sent out a County officer. In that garbage ...my time up? In that garbage was all kinds of information and that came from people in Eau Claire. You can't avoid that kind of stuff.

Dan Masterpole - Mr. Gygi, I'm going to have to ask you to close and I look forward to your further testimony at another meeting or in writing.

Mr. Gygi - I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

Dan Masterpole - Thank you.

Mr. Gygi - You're welcome.

Tim Marshall, 33467 County Hwy M, Holcombe, WI 54745

Hello. My name is Tim Marshall. I'm a Ruby Township supervisor. I would just like to see these gates open for the people in my township. We've opened some up already in our township. We've had no problems. Most of these guys here.. they are hunters, they do a good job. They clean up the messes that are in there. I can see no reason for it not to be open. Not just for the hunters but for anybody else.... trappers, fisherman, bird watchers, someone wants to go in there to have their lunch, just as long as they don't throw their trash out like the Eau Claire people did. But, it's public property and should be open to the public. That's really all I really have to say.

Thank you.

Matt Rudnick, W16218 Hwy. 64, Gilman, WI 54433

My name is Matt Rudnick. I would just like to see the trail get opened. I'm an avid outdoorsman. I like to be outside in the woods. If I could drive my pickup in there, it would just save me a lot of wear and tear on myself, my knees are not very good so..... I just like to see it for everybody, not just for hunters. Like you stated before, it would be for anybody who wanted to just go out for a walk, you know, just see what's out there.

John Lee, Holcombe, WI

My name is John Lee. I live in the Town of Lake Holcombe but I live in the woods most of the time. I'm an avid outdoorsman. I've been a logger I've been in the County Forest since the early 70's. I've logged pieces...they're logging pieces now that I cut off 40 years ago. It's kind of nice to see that regrowth and you know, they do a good job.

My thing, and that one gentleman back there said something about well, you know, they already got the one spot...Ruby, now they want this spot. I don't think that's the deal here. The County Forest, I don't know how many acres you have here, 30,000 some, and out in Ruby, there is enough for all of us. Our designated areas for each of the other...the horse, skiing, all that....there are designated areas. I don't think that this would hurt to have another small designated area that would open you know, for the other types of recreation that go on in our forest because it is all of our forest and I think we should share equally and I think we deserve, you know....what we do to have some of them areas. I don't believe it's a takeover by the hunters or nothing...it's just an area that can be utilized for a alittle different purpose so that's kind of my idea...let's share alittle bit and get along and do thisand being that it's been working well in the Town of Ruby so....that's all.

Larry Braden – Can I make one more comment please?

Dan Masterpole – If you'd like to come up and make another comment.

Larry Braden, 20725 175th Street, Cornell, WI 54732

What I would like to say is...I'm Larry Braden. I've been on the trails. I've hiked them and I've been south of the farm there all the way up to E, all the way down to the flowages below me to M, and I've got to say, I've never seen much garbage on that from the snowmobiles or the ATVs. I was really impressed with that.

And as far as damage on the north side, I only know of one case in all the years I've been there. I heard this ramming one night and I grabbed the light and walked to the top of the hill and the ATV trail is right there and the snowmobile trail comes together and goes north. Someone was in there ramming a pickup trying to get out. And....so, you know that whole square there, we know everybody. We grew up all together. Got a few new people coming in but mostly the old neighbors there. We know up to Flaters and everything.

So right away, what I did the next day, I went down and seen Joe Flater and tell him about. It was somebody that left there, had had a few too many drinks, they must have come down Maxfield Road and got in there and come out by me and they hit it until they knocked it down. Then Joe and someone else come in and investigated it but that's the only damage I know of since I've been there all these years. I think that's a pretty good record.

Ryan Turner, 15570 20th Avenue, Colfax, WI 54730

Alright, Ryan Turner from Bloomer WI. I live in Chippewa County also. I do not hunt here. I hunt in Burnett County. We have lots of gates. I look at this as an opportunity to start somewhere, yeah. Let's start opening some of these up. It's public land, its public access. Everybody should be able to use it. I do not hunt this area at all. I believe my dad trapped it for many years, beaver trapped it. I don't hunt it at all. I just believe that it's a starting point and I'm going to learn something from here tonight to maybe help me in Burnett County, maybe Douglas County, St. Croix County, other counties.

It's public land folks. We can all use it. We can all share it. As for motorized vehicles, if I remember correctly, the ski trails are groomed with a snowmobile and pull behind sled just like snowmobile groomers are pulled with a motorized vehiclesled type. I don't want to pick on nobody...we all got to get along.

As for the garbage, the WI Bear Association, you can make the phone call to the president or any of the officers or standing secretary, and somebody will be there, I would bet within 24 hours. We will have it picked up...no cost. Trappers Association, I think, would be just as willing. I am a part of both and we do our annual garbage pickup spring and fall, Highway 35 of Burnett County, north of Danbury, every year. Probably 20 bags of trash...some's probably from bear hunters, some is from coyote hunters...hell,...who knows what it's from but we pick it up regardless. Money, you wouldn't believe the money we find. But, not to get off case, we'll pick it up.

As I asked, has there been any problems? I got my answer. There hasn't been no problems. I think we can really govern it...you got a date set and a closing date. That's all they're asking. And hey.... I'll maybe get to enjoy it too.

Thanks for your time, that's all I got.

Tony Belohlavek, Chippewa Falls, WI

Good evening – I'm Tony Belohlavek. I've been doing a lot of volunteer work in the County Forest in managing some of the wetlands in the County Forest and I've been observing....I just want to make a few comments about the trash.

The trash is unbelievable. There's a few areas that are a little bit more remote than most others and those are the ones that end up getting a lot of trash. We've literally hauled out trailer loads of tires, rims, and just regular garbage... mattresses, kids pools, everything ...you name it, it's been piled up back there.

My personal opinion, I think the reason why this may have been closed to begin with was because there is trash back there because it is more remote and it is easy to leave behind and nobody sees them. I don't want to restrict more.... I would like to see it open during these times personally, but I do want to caution people that trash will be left behind.

Heather Andersen, Town of Auburn.

Heather Andersen, Town of Auburn. You know, I'm married to a trapper, a hunter, a 30 year licensed WI game guy and I've been influenced by him tremendously. I came with the feeling that I was going to compare, you know, the amount of trails that were closed and the amount you know, or to motorized vehicles and those that weren't and I don't think I can do that anymore because this is going to be a restrictive time period on frozen ground. I think it should be opened up...I think it should be opened up to the hunters. We've hunted with dogs....we've raised Airedales and they're damn good trackers. We've never lost a downed deer or a downed bear because we have some good tracking dogs. So, I understand totally what you people are talking about. I think it should be opened up during this particular time and dang, I changed my mind from coming through the door and I would say yes, open it up.

It appears that there are other places for other recreational use and....go for it. Good for you guys...good for being here.

Thanks.

Allison Sazama, Chippewa Falls, WI

Hi, Allison Sazama. I am also married to a hunter but I am also a nature enthusiast myself. I'm concerned that opening up this particular piece. You know, there's a lot of County Forest and I can't say how much is open and isn't open, but I just feel this is setting a precedent. I would like to hear more why it was prohibited in the first place before we decide what we want to do.

Everyone wants to use the forest and that's great. We want to be able to continue to do that but there's people that don't want to be out there when people are hunting. We want to be hiking...I know this is frozen ground.....again.....I don't have all the information I need, but I did want to voice my concern about, you know, learning more about why this is being opened and the reason it was closed in the first place. That's pretty much it for now.

Thanks.

Richard Smith Town of Sampson

I'm Richard Smith and I live in the Town of Sampson. I don't happen to hunt but I'm a big advocate of public access, as evidenced by the fact that I spend a great deal of time working with

the Ice Age Trail and the Chippewa County Land Conservancy, both of whom are very strongly committed to public access.

I think the thing that I haven't heard in the discussion tonight, even though we touched on it when we talked about garbage and dumping materials of all kinds, is that our experience at the Ice Age Trail, which is not in this area, but it's County Forest, and to some extent, the logic is the same no matter where you go, is that the access trails that we follow to have access to the Ice Age Trail for maintenance purposes, have often taken a serious hit from unauthorized abuse.

Whether it be vandalism or outright, well outright vandalism or just the kind of joyriding and spring time activity that causes the rutting that you alluded to earlier. Lots of damage to the trails that have become impassable for the purposes for what they were intended whether it be hunter access or maintenance of, or in my case, the Ice Age Trail. One occasion, I walked in half a mile or whatever it is to the trail and found with a mower, found an enormous pile of yard waste. Somebody drove all the way back to the end of that trail and dumped an enormous pile of yard waste.

I think the thing that is kind of absent here from the conversation is that once you open it, there'll be more...there's continual demand to open more. There is a logic here that says if anything can be opened to anybody at any time anywhere, then why isn't everything open to anybody anytime anywhere and without exception and without regulation. The fact is, you have to have serious...to make this all work, you have to have serious regulation. To say let's all get along and let's all kind of take our corner and respect each other and work together is nice and everything if we are all in a family or friends. As someone pointed out earlier, someone may come from Eau Claire, someone may come from Cornell, it doesn't really matter where they come from but if they're a joyrider with their pickup truck and they just love to drive in the backroads, it's hard to keep them off.

The previous management team and the current management team, I think have all had frustrations with the amount of vandalism. I've requested that gates be reinstalled where they were destroyed and have been told that gates are just not functional anymore. We don't use gates anymore because they're expensive, they are repeatedly damaged and destroyed to the point of being unusable. In fact, they've become a hindrance. They don't allow the authorized use to occur that was intended. The staff, I believe, has gone to using boulders and other sorts of structures like that to block access where it needs to be blocked. So, it really is difficult to manage this forest.

I'm not telling you anything you don't all know and I respect the fact that you are working with a many headed hydra, but I think everyone should be aware that once you open the trail for motorized access, you're opening it for everybody. People with good intentions and bad. People with, you know.....it just won't be the guy with the pickup truck with the dogs in the back. It's gonna be some idiot that's gonna come and who decides he wants to tear ass through. That's all part of the program and I would say be real clear about what your rationale is for this particular spot being open so it isn't a rationale for opening every spot.

On #2, be sure you limit somehow theeither the speed limit perhaps to 10 mph, whatever is approximate for everybody's satisfaction, but to keep the joyriding, and the whatever term you might want to use, and I guess you've had that rule up there about the dumping and I guess, my suggestion would be stay....you know, be firm about that. If that occurs, the gates get closed.

And when gates get yanked, or get destroyed, they've got to be replaced and that is all costing a great deal...there's got to be a budget for that. That's all part of the clear analysis of putting it all together.

Thank you.