



Friends of Sylvania

Promoting the protection and careful management of the Sylvania Wilderness

www.friendsofsylvania.org

P.O. Box 6353
Monona, WI 53716

Norman E. Nass, District Ranger
E23979 US Highway 2 East
Watersmeet, MI 49969

September 20, 2015

Re: Wilderness Lakes Bike Trail System Project

Dear Norman Nass,

Friends of Sylvania (FoS) is a strong supporter of ‘silent sports’, including biking (several board members and many of our friends are bikers). However, after long and serious discussions and considerations of the issue among board members and friends, we have arrived at the conclusion that opening FR 6380 to bikes would be a serious mistake.

A retired Forest Service employee, who cares greatly about Sylvania, made the following comments: “FR 6380 was closed by the Ottawa FS back in the 90s... Prior to that, it had been open to use by motorists [it was also used illegally by ATVs]. It was determined by FS at that time that closing FR 6380 was necessary to protect the wilderness... It took a great deal of effort and time to close the road... Reopening it now would be a serious mistake.”

FoS does not support the reopening of FR 6380, a road adjacent to the Sylvania Wilderness, for the following reasons:

- Restricting the use of that road to bicycles only will not be possible. ATVs and snowmobiles are currently using FR 6380 illegally, and the Forest Service does not have the law enforcement personnel to prevent such unauthorized use. The argument that the presence of bikes will minimize ATV and snowmobile use is not valid because ATVs and snowmobiles can go at night and all winter. Furthermore, access for bikes will lead ATV and snowmobile groups to push for “their” right and “their” access.
- FR 6380 is part of the western boundary of the Sylvania Wilderness. There is little to prevent ATVs and snowmobiles, once on that road, to enter the wilderness.
- Even some bikers may not respect Sylvania and enter the Wilderness.

- The bike trail will need to be maintained which will require legal motorized equipment resulting in noise immediately adjacent to the Wilderness and the probable introduction and spreading of invasive plants.
- Several invasive plants are already growing along that road, and they will be spread to other places by foot traffic, bicycles, unauthorized and authorized vehicles.
- FR 6380 is a remote road not easily accessible if there were an emergency or health issue for bikers. Furthermore, the quality of biking is significantly better on paved surfaces than on crushed gravel bike trails.

The proper solution to providing safe biking around Sylvania would be to do it right, to provide bike lanes on the existing paved perimeter roads which would be easier to maintain. Furthermore, opening FR 6380 to bikes would not provide significant safety benefits to bikers since most of the bike trail around Sylvania is on CR 535.

Sylvania is a relatively small wilderness that is being impacted by a multitude of threats. The many negatives from opening FR 6380 to bikers will greatly outweigh the relatively small benefits gained by bikers. We hope that this issue can be properly resolved by establishing bike trails on existing paved perimeter roads. However, if the Forest Service chooses to allow bikes or any other new activities on FR 6380, written documents and appropriate funding would be needed to ensure that such decision is enforced.

In accordance with the mission of FoS, “to promote the protection and careful management of Sylvania”, we are in support of keeping FR 6380 closed to any kind of use except non-mechanical recreation.

Please feel free to contact FoS (W. Brinkmann, wabrinkm@wisc.edu/608.222-6717) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W. Brinkmann". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Waltraud Brinkmann (President), Robert Evans, Daniel Wallace, Craig Coleman
Friends of Sylvania

Cc: Linda Jackson, Forest Supervisor
Daniel Ryskey, Wilderness Ranger
Melissa Simpson, Recreation and Wilderness Specialist