

DAN BENISHEK M.D.
FIRST DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

514 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-2201
(202) 225-4735
WWW.BENISHEK.HOUSE.GOV



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

November 12, 2013

Mr. Anthony Scardina
Forest Supervisor, Ottawa National Forest
E6248 US 2
Ironwood, MI 49938

Dear Mr. Scardina,

I write to you today to discuss forest road usage in the Ottawa National Forest. As you are aware, in 2005, the Forest Service published final regulations that governed the use of Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs) and other motor vehicles on all national forest lands, including the Ottawa National Forest. As stated on your website, this rule "requires individual national forests to designate those roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use. Once designation is complete on a national forest or ranger district, the rule will prohibit motor vehicles off the designated system."

As the Ottawa transitions from an "open until closed" to a "closed until open" trail system, I have been hearing from a number of constituents in Northern Michigan who are concerned with some of the changes that have taken place. Specifically, I would like to know more about the following:

1. As the Supervisor, how have you gathered local input regarding the designation of roads and trails for motor vehicle use in the Ottawa National Forest?
2. When developing the 2013 Motor Vehicle Use Map, did you hold open public meetings to determine if the map met with the needs of the community?
3. Portions of some roads previously open to ORVs have been closed, but remain open to motorized travel (specifically FS Road #3475). This circumstance creates additional burdens for the law-abiding citizen, as they are forced to haul their ORV through portions of the Ottawa in order to remain compliant. Please explain the decision to close off portions of these roads that have been previously open to ORV use.
4. In other circumstances, all forms of motorized vehicles have been banned from roads (i.e. FS Road #3243) that previously allowed traffic. In these circumstances, did you consider previous use by the community?

Use of the Ottawa National Forest is highly treasured, not only by local residents, but by visitors from around the country as well. The Ottawa contributes recreational, educational, and

economic significance to Northern Michigan's economy. As you are aware, the citizens of Michigan's First Congressional District not only use the Ottawa National Forest—they, deservedly, feel that they have a seat at the table.

I look forward to your response. Should you have any additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me directly at (202)225-4735.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Benishek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dan" being particularly prominent.

Dan Benishek M.D.
Member of Congress
Michigan's First District