



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

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February 6, 2003

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Mr. Carl Merrick
415 Rockrimmon Road
Belchertown, MA 01007

Dear Mr. Merrick:

This letter is written in response to your concerns with the use of over 1000-pound vehicles on Old Florida Road.

Old Florida Road passing through the Savoy Mountain State Forest, lies within the towns of Florida and Adams. The current condition of the road is a serious safety and environmental concern for the Department of Environmental Management (DEM). Much of the road is eroded to bedrock and ledge creating a hazard to the operation of motorized vehicles. Other sections of road pass directly through wetlands and through a brook that feeds Tower Swamp. Motorized vehicles drive through the wetlands and brook causing significant environmental damage. This damage can be considered a wetland violation.

The current status of the historic roadbed as a legal right of way and open to the public for over 1000-pound vehicle use is unclear. Legal help has been requested to determine the status and ownership of the road.

Preliminary on the ground evidence and historic maps show that a significant portion of the original Old Florida Road no longer exists and has been lost for many years under Tower Swamp. As beavers flooded the area, the wetland community took over the road. The trail used by over 1000-pound vehicles to circumvent the swamp is on state forest and park land. All-terrain vehicles, motorcycles and snowmobiles have also used this trail. The use of over 1000-pound vehicles on this or any trail within state forest and park property is prohibited. These types of vehicles have caused significant trail and environmental damage to the trails of Savoy Mountain State Forest and many other trails in the region.

This area has become a regional destination, attracting hundreds of over 1000-lb. vehicle enthusiasts to the forest including the numerous organized jeep clubs. In the past, evidence has been found that on the weekends of organized event rides, over 1000-pound vehicles have significantly damaged other trails within the state forest. This is a concern not only to the staff, but also to the many other trail users and volunteer maintainers.