

Testimony of Sheriff Ed Oswald, Delta County
RE: SB 1003 (Sen. VanderWall)
9/28/22
House Judiciary Committee

ORV Enforcement Officer

-Thank you, Chair Filler for allowing me to discuss this much needed legislation to allow us to train and employ seasonal officers for ORV enforcement, just as we do for marine and snowmobile enforcement.

-My name is Ed Oswald, Sheriff of Delta County and the UP Sheriff Rep, representing UP Counties on the MSA Board of Directors.

-We, as most all UP Counties do, have a large amount of State and Federal land with trails that we are tasked with patrolling for enforcement purposes. Much of this area throughout the U.P. has very little calls for service other than ORV enforcement. (We are a county of 1,191 square miles of land alone) If we direct one of the two or three patrols to patrol this area we are reduced to one or two patrol officers to handle patrol calls, serve court papers and enforce traffic laws.

-Much of the UP is a very remote area that offers numerous trails as well as roadways for ORV travel.

-Our ORV population swells on the weekends and holidays; downstate people and their families travel north on vacation with their ORV's to use our vast ORV trail system throughout the UP.

-The UP ORV population grows while our Counties do not have an increase in a funding mechanism to allow for additional patrols due to the increased ORV population. The very state and federal land that makes our counties the gold standard in trail riding, also hamstrings our county property tax revenue and therefore our ability to keep our residents and visitors safe.

-This bill, if passed, would allow us to utilize my Marine Officer, (who is a school teacher) to also patrol with an ORV and perform Marine duties in the summer.

This professional seasonal officer is much cheaper than a fulltime road patrol officer giving us up to twice the patrol hours than that of a full-time road patrol officer.

-Federal and state Marine, Snowmobile, and ATV patrol grants that used to fund a full-time MCOLES deputy in my county have been gutted over the years (how much? Half?). I used to employ an officer full time to work ATV, Marine, and Snowmobile with those grants, but they have diminished to the point that I can no longer maintain that position with the grant funding I receive.

- Sheriff Offices have been employing seasonal officers for Marine patrol for over 30 years. We are elected by the people of our community, much like you are. We need professional officers representing our offices in these enforcement roles. The passage of this bill would give me and other Sheriffs the ability to expand the use of our non-licensed staff for purposes of protecting ORV trail riders, just as they currently protect citizens that are involved in the use of recreational boats and snowmobiles.

*Thank you for taking time to listen to us discuss this important legislation.