

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–2201

November 20, 2024

Alger County Road Commission
E9264 M-28
Munising, MI 49862

Members of the Alger County Road Commission:

I write to express my profound disappointment in the Alger County Road Commission's (ACRC) unilateral decision to cut off snowmobile access to Miners Castle within Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. Your choice to allow the expiration of the shared usage agreement with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for County Highway 58 (H-58) demonstrates a blatant disregard for the economic wellbeing of the surrounding community and the voices of the of the residents you are entrusted to serve.

ACRC claims it recognizes the importance of winter tourism and snowmobiling to the economy of Alger County and, more broadly, the State of Michigan. This stance stands in direct opposition to your actions – ACRC seems to keep coming up with new ways to oppose Trail No. 422's continued operation. Despite ACRC citing concerns about damage to H-58 caused by snowmobiles and incidents between snowmobiles and passenger vehicles, **DNR has been unable to identify any significant road damage or locate any records of accidents involving snowmobiles and motorists on the roadway during Trail No. 422's more than forty years of existence.**

What can be verified, however, is the substantial economic benefit provided to the Munising community by all-season tourism to Pictured Rocks. A September 5, 2024, report by the National Park Service found that the **910,000 visitors** to Pictured Rocks in 2023 spent **\$45.8 million** in communities near the park – stopping in our shops, eating at our restaurants, and staying in our hotels. That spending supported **540 jobs** in the local area and yielded a cumulative benefit to the local economy of **\$48.7 million**.^[1]

As you know, Michigan is as much a winter destination as it is a summer one, with thousands of snowmobilers from across the Midwest flocking to Pictured Rocks each winter to visit and enjoy the crown jewel of the Upper

[1] Bradburn, Hannah. "Tourism to Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore Contributes \$45,770,000 to Local Economy." National Park Service, September 5, 2024. <https://www.nps.gov/piro/learn/news/2024-09-05-piro-visitor-spending.htm>.



Peninsula. To this end, the U.S. Department of the Interior recognizes Pictured Rocks to be **only one of three parks in the country with significant snowmobile visitation.**^[2]

By allowing the shared usage agreement with DNR for H-58 to expire, ACRC is effectively choosing to turn away thousands of snowmobilers and outdoor enthusiasts who contribute tens of millions of dollars to our local economy every year. What message does this send about Alger County?

Make no mistake – the residents of Alger County will not forget your contempt for their wellbeing and economic security. While the effects of Trail No. 422’s closure may not be felt immediately, the long-term economic harm to Munising will echo throughout the area for years to come.

Should Trail No. 422 close on December 1, this episode will become a cautionary tale of the Alger County Road Commission’s shortsighted leadership that failed its constituents, its businesses, and its visitors. National attention will turn to this closure, and the legacy of this commission will be one of economic harm and community betrayal. However, you still have a chance to reverse course. I urge you to do the right thing and prevent this closure before the damage becomes irreversible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jack Bergman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jack Bergman
Member of Congress

^[2] Snyder, Michael. “NPS Snowmobile Use.” U.S. Department of the Interior, April 12, 2005. <https://www.doi.gov/oc/nps-snowmobile-use>.