

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

October 3, 2024

Marci Taskey  
Chair, Board of County Road Commissioners  
Alger County Road Commission  
E9264 M-28  
Munising, MI 49862

Ms. Taskey:

I write to express my concern with the impending expiration of the Alger County Road Commission's (ACRC) shared usage agreement on County Highway 58 (H-58) with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

On December 1, 2024, DNR will no longer be permitted to operate designated Snowmobile Trail No. 422 on the 0.8-mile section of roadway that it currently shares with H-58 unless a new shared usage agreement is reached with ACRC. As DNR has been unable to identify any viable reroutes of the trail to move it off H-58, ACRC's discontinuation of the current shared usage agreement would effectively result in the complete closure of Trail No. 422. For many years, this 13-mile trail has served as the only snowmobile-accessible route to Miners Castle, allowing scores of snowmobilers and outdoor enthusiasts from across the Midwest to visit and enjoy one of the Upper Peninsula's most unique scenic features at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore.

The closure of Trail No. 422 would be a devastating loss, not just to the Munising area's recreation community, but also to the surrounding business owners whose livelihoods depend largely on the economic benefits derived from annual tourism to the area.

Businesses across Alger County – especially smaller and family-owned ones – are still reeling from the revenue losses incurred during last year's unusually warm winter and are relying on the upcoming winter season to boost their economic recovery. However, should Trail No. 422 close before the season begins, this anticipated boost would almost certainly fail to materialize.

Moreover, the National Park Service (NPS) has indicated serious safety and environmental concerns associated with any closure of Trail No. 422. Similar instances to the one at hand have demonstrated that, while the closure of an area or route usually results in a change in visitor use patterns, it rarely leads to a change in visitation.



Having been a popular snowmobile route for many years, Trail No. 422's closure would have little impact on the number of riders visiting every winter. Rather, riders would likely continue to use the ungroomed trail – including the 0.8-mile section of H-58 – to access Miners Castle, though this would introduce new safety concerns. While riding on ungroomed trails presents risks of their own, particular concern must be paid to the possibility of unauthorized travel on H-58. With snowmobile travel being technically prohibited on the roadway, vehicle operators might be less vigilant about watching for riders.

For other riders, Trail No. 422's closure would simply compel them to seek alternate paths to Miners Castle. Such paths could disrupt the park's natural flora and fauna, damaging the very areas and ecosystems our park rangers work so hard to preserve.

On behalf of our Alger County business owners, outdoor enthusiasts, environmentalists, and the many visitors from across the Midwest who travel to Munising each winter to experience Pictured Rocks, I implore ACRC to carefully consider the wide-ranging impacts that letting H-58's shared usage agreement expire would have on Michigan's First District, far beyond the 0.8-mile section of roadway in question.

Please know that my office stands ready to assist ACRC in any way possible, so do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



Jack Bergman  
Member of Congress

cc: John Hermann  
Pete Heyrman  
Robert Lindbeck, P.E.  
Daniel Rushford