

3 New Access Needs

3.1 Purpose

The primary purpose of identifying new access needs in SFRMP planning is to provide a rough estimate of general location, miles, and type of new access needed to implement the 10-year plan. The preliminary access needs information also:

- provides a rough assessment of new state forest road construction needs for budget development
- identifies access that will require a USFS road use permit or special use permit
- addresses access, habitat fragmentation, and road density concerns via post-sale access management intentions on the estimated new access/new temporary access.

3.2 Scope

The scope of identifying new access needs in an SFRMP is limited to:

- estimating the miles of new state forest road and new temporary access needed to access stands identified for treatment in the SFRMP
- identifying (tagging) stands for which new access is needed.

Developing a comprehensive access plan for all land ownerships within the subsections is beyond the scope of SFRMP planning. Establishing a guideline for maximum road/trail density in these subsections is also beyond the scope of this plan. The DNR cooperates and coordinates with other landowners on road and trail use and development. Such cooperation and coordination will be used to minimize new road/access development, forest fragmentation, and disturbance to wildlife. Comprehensive timber access plans for DNR lands by forestry administrative area or subsection is also beyond the scope of the SFRMP. As stated above in the purpose and scope, the SFRMP only provides a rough estimate of new access needs. Additional information on the scope of access needs in SFRMP and forest roads on state lands can be found in Chapter 5, Comment Topics 105–112, on pages 5.76–5.79 of this document.

3.3 DNR Road Classifications

The following DNR forest road classifications were used in identifying new access needs:

System Roads

These roads are the major roads in the forest that provide forest management and recreational access. They may be connected to state, county, or township public road systems. These roads are used at least weekly and often daily. The roads should be graveled and maintained to allow travel by highway vehicles, and road bonding money can be used to fund their construction and reconstruction. The level and frequency of maintenance is at the discretion of the area forester and as budgets will allow. These roads are open to all motorized vehicles but can be closed temporarily to address seasonal road or fire conditions.

Minimum Maintenance Roads

These roads are used for forest management access on an intermittent, as-needed basis. Recreational users may use them, but the roads are not promoted or maintained for recreation. The roads are open to all motorized vehicles but not maintained to the level where low-clearance licensed highway vehicles can travel routinely on them. The roads are graded and graveled as needed for forest management purposes. Major damage such as culvert washouts or other conditions that may pose a safety hazard to the public is repaired as reported and as budgets allow. The roads are open to all motorized vehicles but can be temporarily closed to address road deterioration or fire conditions.

Resource Management Access Routes

These routes are used only during management activity. They are not immediately needed after management activity ends but the corridor is preserved for future management activity. Specific closure methods (e.g., gate, berm, rocks, or felled timber) are determined at the time the route is established. These routes are closed to all motorized recreation use (For hunting, trapping, etc. exceptions, see Minnesota Statutes 84.926).

Temporary Access Routes

If the access route does not fit into one of the first three options, it must be abandoned and the site reclaimed so evidence of a travel route is minimized. The effort needed to abandon temporary accesses varies depending on location of the access (e.g., swamp/winter vs. upland route), remoteness, and existing recreational use pressures. Field staff will determine the specific techniques to reclaim or reforest the route. No gates or signs are erected that call attention to the existence of the corridor except if needed to aid abandonment. Temporary access routes are used only during management activity. They are closed to all motorized recreation use (For hunting, trapping, etc. exceptions, see Minnesota Statutes 84.926).

3.4 New Access Needs and Ecologically Important Lowland Conifer (EILC) Areas

The following guidelines were used for identifying access needs on state lands identified as ecologically important lowland conifer (EILC) areas:

- Field staff should consider road access and EILC areas on a case-by-case basis, applying the following principles (in order):
 1. Try to avoid EILC areas if possible. Use other reasonable access routes that don't involve EILC stands if they are available. Go around the EILC area if it is small.
 2. If the only reasonable access to stands that the team agrees need to be field visited and potentially treated is across EILC areas, then strive to minimize impacts. For example:
 - Create seasonal/temporary access rather than a permanent road (The forest resources issues team (FRIT) assumes that since EILC areas are lowlands, most of the road access needed across EILC areas would be seasonal winter roads).
 - Keep corridors narrow.
 - Select routes that cause the least disturbance.

3.5 New Access Needs and Recreational Trails

The SFRMP does not address the management (e.g., gating, abandonment) of existing state forest roads or designated recreational trails. SFRMPs do not identify which new forest roads or temporary accesses should be added to or designated as recreational trails. The new access needs information will be available to off-highway vehicle (OHV) teams or other teams who have responsibility for OHV and other recreational trails evaluations and designations. Some of the DNR staff involved in this SFRMP plan will be involved in the state forest OHV plans. During the OHV planning process, current forest access routes on state lands are examined for both motorized and nonmotorized recreation uses and recommendations are made for designating and decommissioning OHV trail miles. The OHV planning process recognizes that non-motorized recreational opportunities have to be considered in the process to prevent motorized activities from totally preempting non-motorized recreational opportunities. During the new access needs step for this plan, all identified new accesses were given the preliminary classifications of *resource management access route* or *temporary access route*. Under these *preliminary* classifications, the routes will not be available for motorized recreation users. Some of the new access routes needed to carry out the SFRMP may become open to OHV use, based on location (e.g., proximity to existing OHV trail) and other site-specific factors, but that determination will be made under the OHV planning process or some other process when/after the actual new access route is determined.

3.6 Interdisciplinary Review of Access Planning

During the development of each SFRMP, area fish and wildlife staff, assigned ecological services staff, and area forestry staff review all forest access needs and agree on the type of access needed and post-use disposition. In addition, as part of annual coordination meetings, consultation with the appropriate staff on the location of new access routes shall occur where endangered, threatened, or special concern (ETS) species, rare native plant communities, or other significant non-timber forest resources may be affected. Such instances may be identified in the review of annual stand exam list or as part of joint site visits associated with the stand or stands being accessed. (*From March 2006 Draft DNR Interdisciplinary Forest Management Coordination Policy*)

3.7 New Access Needs Identification

New access needs were identified by field stand (with interdisciplinary input and/or review) after stands were identified for treatment in the 10-year stand selection step. Details on the directions provided to field staff for identifying new access needs are included in the Appendix:

Appendix C: Directions for New Access Needs Step

Appendix D: Identifying New Access Needs in SFRMP

The new access needs maps in Appendix K show the stand locations where new access routes are needed. The SFRMP process does not identify, map, or digitize detailed routes for the identified new access needs. Actual route layout will occur on the ground at the time of project implementation. Interdisciplinary involvement, as described in the Interdisciplinary Forest

Management Coordination Policy (currently being revised), will be included when the on-the-ground layout of access routes occurs.

Note: The maps have been reduced and printed in grayscale in this document. It is recommended that these maps be viewed at a larger scale and in color. The colored maps and this report can be viewed at <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/subsection/northshorearea/index.html>, are available in CD format, and may be viewed at the open houses that will be held for public review.

3.8 New Access Needs Results

The new access needs step identified a potential need for 162 miles of new access in this 3,750 square-mile landscape unit. During the new access needs step for this plan, all identified new accesses were given the preliminary classification of *resource management access route* or *temporary access route*. Based on these preliminary road classifications, these access routes will not be available for motorized recreation use after the forest management activity is completed. The preliminary classifications consist of 23 miles of resource management access routes and 139 miles of temporary access routes. The road classification, mileage, and closure method are subject to change when field staff completes the actual on-the-ground road layout. Interdisciplinary review and the applicable public review process (e.g., OHV planning process) will be followed if significant changes are made.

Table 3.1 summarizes the number of miles by new access route type needed to access the stands in the 10-year SFRMP for these subsections.

Table 3.1: New Access Needs Miles by Subsection, Season of Use, and Access Type

Subsection	Season of Use	Resource Management Access Route	Temporary Access Route	Total Miles
North Shore Highlands	Summer	3.3	10.6	13.9
	Winter	9.8	80.3	90.1
Total		13.1	90.9	104.0
Toimi Uplands	Summer	4.2	0.7	4.9
	Winter	0.0	10.7	10.7
Total		4.2	11.4	15.6
Laurentian Uplands	Summer	3.7	3.4	7.1
	Winter	1.8	33.0	34.8
Total		5.5	36.4	41.9
All 3 Subsections	Summer	11.2	14.7	25.9
	Winter	11.6	124.0	135.6
Total		22.8	138.7	161.5

Table 3.2 provides a preliminary estimate of the number of miles by subsection, permit type, and access route type that will need a USFS road use permit and/or special use permit to access the stands in the 10-year SFRMP for these subsections.

Table 3.2: New Access Needs Miles by Subsection, USFS Permit Type, and Access Type

Subsection	USFS Permit Type	Resource Management Access Route	Temporary Access Route	Total Miles
North Shore Highlands	F	0.0	3.4	3.4
	G	4.5	9.4	13.9
	F and G	0.0	6.3	6.3
Total		4.5	19.1	23.6
Toimi Uplands	F	0.0	2.5	2.5
	G	0.0	1.0	1.0
	F and G	0.0	2.2	2.2
Total		0.0	5.7	5.7
Laurentian Uplands	F	0.2	4.6	4.8
	G	0.0	7.0	7.0
	F and G	1.3	11.8	13.1
Total		1.5	23.4	24.9
All 3 Subsections Summary	F	0.2	10.5	10.7
	G	4.5	17.4	21.9
	F and G	1.3	20.3	21.6
Total		6.0	48.2	54.2

F - The route is likely to use an existing national forest system road. A USFS road use permit is required.

G - The route is likely to use an existing non-national forest system road/corridor or is likely to require a new route/corridor across national forest land. A USFS special use permit required.

F and G – Both types of USFS permits will likely be needed.

A very small portion of the USFS Superior National Forest Roadless Areas is located within these three subsections. Only one stand on state lands in these three subsections is located within the roadless areas and it was not selected for treatment in this plan.

Blank Page