Beltrami Island State Forest
Motor Vehicle Use Classification
Forest Road and Trail Designation

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Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Beltrami Island Road & Trail Project Team

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Purpose

Minnesota Laws 2003, Chapter 128, Article 1, Section 167 as amended by Minnesota Laws 2005, 1st Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 2, Section 152 directs the Commissioner of Natural Resources to review the recreational motor vehicle use classification of State Forest lands and to designate forest roads and trails. Following public review and comment, the Commissioner of Natural Resources implements the motor vehicle use classification and road and trail designations through publication of written orders.

Between 2003 and 2008, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will review the motor vehicle use classification and designate forest roads and trails on all State Forest lands in Minnesota.

1.2 Lands Covered by this Plan

This plan covers State Forest lands in and near the Beltrami Island State Forest. The Beltrami Island State Forest is located north of Upper Red Lake and south of Lake of the Woods. The State Forest covers portions of Beltrami, Lake of the Woods, and Roseau counties. The statutory boundary of the Beltrami Island State Forest encompasses over 700,000 acres. This plan deals primarily with the publicly owned State Forest lands administered by the DNR Division of Forestry in the Beltrami Island area.

In addition to State Forest lands there are State Park, Wildlife Management Area, Scientific & Natural Area, and federal lands leased by the DNR in the Beltrami Island area. There are private lands and lands of the Red Lake Band of the Chippewa in and around the Beltrami Island State Forest. Lands belonging to the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians in Beltrami, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods and Roseau counties are closed to non-band members except by special authorizations of the tribal council. For more information, contact the Red Lake Band Department of Natural Resources at (218) 679-3959. These non-State Forest lands are not covered by this plan although they influence the management of State Forest lands.

1.3 Forest Access Route Inventory

The forest access route inventory documented 1134 miles of roads, trails, and other routes in the Beltrami Island Area. There were about 350 miles of State Forest Road in the existing road inventory in the Beltrami Island area when this project began. About 750 miles of the routes documented had no previous designation as a forest road or recreational trail. There were no designated OHV trails in the Beltrami Island area when the inventory was compiled.

1.4 Motor Vehicle Use Classification and Areas with Limitations on Off-trail and Non-designated Trail Use

All State Forest lands in the Beltrami Island area are currently classified as managed with respect to motor vehicle use. The DNR plans to retain the managed classification for the Beltrami Island
State Forest and the 1,418 acres of scattered State Forest lands located in northern Beltrami County.

The Commissioner of Natural Resources can designate areas on State Forest lands where the big game hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle use exceptions do not apply (*MN Statutes* section 84.926). The DNR designates these ‘areas with limitations on off-trail and non-designated trail use’ to protect unique natural resource values and to provide diverse recreational and hunting opportunities. The DNR will designate four such areas with limitations covering a total of 11,099 acres in the Beltrami Island State Forest.

### 1.5 Summary of Route Designations

The following table summarizes the designations of the inventoried forest routes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route Designation</th>
<th>Miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forest Roads</td>
<td>474.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System Roads*</td>
<td>355.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Maintenance Roads*</td>
<td>118.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails</td>
<td>290.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Walking</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-motorized (hike, horse, hunting, etc.)</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATV/OHM*</td>
<td>238.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-designated</td>
<td>604.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Routes</td>
<td>399.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Closures</td>
<td>139.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-vegetated Paths</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated by Non-state Ownership</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Red Lake Band or private owner permission required or trespass charges may apply)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Inventoried Routes = 1,134.1 miles**

* There are 234.4 miles of routes that were dual designated as both forest roads and ATV/OHM Trail. Thus the designation mileage does not total to the 1,134.1 miles of inventoried routes. The designation mileage totals to the inventory mileage if 234.4 miles are subtracted from either the road designation or the trail designation mileage. (ATV/OHM Trail and System Forest Road = 140.1 miles) (ATV/OHM Trail and Min. Maint. Forest Road = 94.3 miles)

### 1.6 Implementation and Monitoring

The Commissioner of Natural Resources will publish Commissioner’s Orders in the *State Register* to:

1. Classify State Forest lands with respect to motor vehicle use and designate areas with limitations on off-trail and non-designated trail use,
2. Designate and un-designate State Forest Roads, and
3. Designate OHV and non-motorized recreational trails.

The DNR is committed to substantially completing the development and signing of designated roads and trails prior to effective date in the Commissioner’s Orders. The effective date will be December 31, 2007.
The DNR will monitor designated roads and trails for maintenance needs and sustainability. Education and enforcement will be used to ensure compliance with road and trail use designations.

Roads and trails may be temporarily closed as warranted by weather conditions (for example, during Spring breakup, high fire hazard, after extreme storm events) or while needed repairs are made. Permanent changes to the designated trail system (change in allowed uses, addition or deletion of designated trails) will be subject to public review and comment.

2 BACKGROUND

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages over 4 million acres of State Forest land for the people of Minnesota. Minnesota's State Forests are managed to produce timber, provide outdoor recreation, protect watersheds, and perpetuate rare and distinctive species of native flora and fauna. State Forests are managed to ensure they remain healthy, vital, and productive for present and for future generations. State Forests provide a variety of unstructured outdoor recreation opportunities, such as hunting, trapping, berry picking, and nature observation. For more structured activities, many State Forests contain recreation facilities such as campgrounds, day-use areas, and trails for various motorized and non-motorized uses. Minnesota statutes set broad direction for management of State Forests by directing the Commissioner of Natural Resources to:

- Manage State Forests according to the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. (MS 89.002, Subd.1)
- Provide a system of forest roads and trails to access State Forest lands. (MS 89.002, Subd. 3)

Prior to the mid-1980’s recreational motor vehicle use was generally allowed in most State Forests. As the number of Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs) increased, the DNR closed some forests to OHV use and began developing trails and other facilities for OHV use in other State Forests. In late 1996, the DNR began to reassess its OHV management programs. The DNR proposed classifying State Forests as managed, limited, or closed with respect to recreational motor vehicle use. In 1999 the DNR revised the rules governing recreational use of State Forests.

Minnesota Laws 2003, Chapter 128, Article 1, Section 167 as amended by Minnesota Laws 2005, 1st Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 2, Section 152 directs the Commissioner of Natural Resources to review the recreational motor vehicle use classification of State Forest lands and to designate forest roads and trails. Following public review and comment, the Commissioner of Natural Resources implements the motor vehicle use classification and road and trail designations through publication of written orders (see Appendix A for laws and rules related to forest classification and route designation).

For the purpose of this plan ‘motor vehicle’ means vehicles that are licensed for use on public highways and off-highway vehicles (OHVs), but does not include snowmobiles. Off-highway vehicle (OHV) is defined in Minnesota statutes to include all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), off-
highway motorcycles (OHMs), and off-road vehicles (ORVs), such as Jeeps and four-wheel drive trucks. This plan identifies the roads and trails that the DNR proposes to designate as open to various types of motor vehicles in the Beltrami Island State Forest and other scattered State Forest lands in northern Beltrami County.

2.1 Process

In November 2004, the DNR released public review drafts of two documents:

(1) Review of the Classification for Motor Vehicle Use in the Beltrami Island State Forest Area

(2) Forest Road and Trail Designation Plan for the Beltrami Island State Forest

These documents were prepared in compliance with the 2003 legislation, which directed the DNR to change the classification of State Forest lands to either limited or closed and to designate roads and trails that would be signed as open to motor vehicle use.

In the draft plan the DNR proposed that the Beltrami Island State Forest be classified as limited and that about 540 miles of routes be designated as roads or trails and signed as open to motor vehicle use.

In February 2005 a public meeting to receive comments on the plan was held in Warroad. Many people attended the meeting or submitted comments on the draft plans. The DNR collected and analyzed all written comments. Many respondents objected to the proposed classification and felt that too many of the existing routes would be unavailable for motor vehicle use.


In October 2005, DNR and cooperating agency staff began revising the plan for the Beltrami Island State Forest based on the public comments and the amended law. Members of the Beltrami, Lake of the Woods, and Roseau County Boards participated in the revision process. Additional public input was received at informational meetings held in each county.

3 Description of Lands Covered by the Plan

The Beltrami Island State Forest is located north of Upper Red Lake and south of Lake of the Woods. The State Forest covers portions of Beltrami, Lake of the Woods, and Roseau counties. The cities of Warroad and Roseau are northwest of the forest and Baudette lies to the northeast. Portions of Hayes Lake State Park and the Red Lake Wildlife Management Area are within the boundaries of the Beltrami Island State Forest.

3.1 Location, Acreage, and Ownership

The land ownership pattern in and around the Beltrami Island State Forest is quite complex with several governmental agencies and private entities managing intermixed parcels of land. This plan deals primarily with forest lands under the authority of the Commissioner of Natural Resources that are administered by the DNR Division of Forestry. The Division of Forestry administers about 288,000 acres of land within the Beltrami Island State Forest. This plan also
covers 1,418 acres of Division of Forestry administered lands outside of the State Forest boundary in northern Beltrami County (see Appendix B). There are about 82,000 acres of Land Utilization Project (LUP) lands in and around the Beltrami Island State Forest. These LUP lands are federal lands leased by the DNR. This plan addresses the existing forest routes that cross LUP lands that are intermixed with Division of Forestry administered lands.

The statutory boundary of the Beltrami Island State Forest encompasses over 700,000 acres. Beltrami County administers 160 acres of forest land within the Beltrami Island State Forest. Lake of the Woods County also administers 160 acres of forest land within the Beltrami Island State Forest. There are State Park, Wildlife Management Area, and Scientific & Natural Area lands within and adjacent to the Beltrami Island State Forests.

There are also private lands, Red Lake Band of the Chippewa lands and Land Utilization Project lands in and around the Beltrami Island State Forest. Red Lake Band of the Chippewa lands are recognized by the state of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as private lands. They are not posted in any unique way. The Red lake Band lands are closed to non-band members except by special authorization of the Tribal Council for specific occurrences/events proposed by the Council. As is the case with all private lands those who cross tribal lands without permission from the Red Lake Band could be cited for trespass. For more information, contact the Red Lake Band Department of Natural Resources at (218) 679-3959. The DNR is involved in ongoing discussions with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service regarding management of interconnected routes on Beltrami Island State Forest lands and Land Utilization Project Lands.

The policies governing motor vehicle use vary between administering agencies and management unit classes (e.g., Wildlife Management Areas, State Forest, State Parks). Designating roads and trails for motor vehicle use in a manner that respects land ownership and complies with applicable regulations yet does not create undue complexity for motor vehicle users was a major challenge for the planning team.

3.2 Natural Resources Assessment

The Beltrami Island State Forest lies within the Agassiz Lowland Ecological Sub-section. There are 3.7 million acres within this sub-section, with typical habitats including black spruce, tamarack, and white cedar lowland conifer forests; non-forested sedge wetlands; and jack pine, birch, and aspen forests on sandy ridges. The entire area was submerged under Glacial Lake Agassiz during the Pleistocene era. There are only a few very small lakes within the BISF. Due to the geologic history of the area, there is little in the way of topographic relief, with former beach ridges at “Blueberry Hill” and “Bemis Hill” being the highest. The Beltrami Island State Forest is unique due to its remoteness, high percentage of state-administered land within the forest, and lack of development within the boundaries of the forest. Due to its un-fragmented character, there are a number of uncommon wildlife and plant species found here. Wolves are fairly abundant. The deer population is at moderate levels. Bobcat and fisher are important fur bearers. Rare birds found within the forest include the Great Gray Owl, Connecticut Warbler, and Spruce Grouse. Ruffed Grouse are found in abundance, and many species of forest interior bird species nest in the large tracts of forest land found here. There are also several species of amphibians and reptiles found in the area.
Bemis Hill is located 18 miles south and west of Warroad. It has a small campground, picnic area, shelter, horse tether, and the only pronounced hill in the forest. It is a popular winter sledding slope, and the hill is managed for this use. ATV use has caused vegetative cover loss leading to significant erosion on trails that go up the hillside. Trail closures and erosion control work has been required. At the base of the hill is a fen with a relatively undisturbed native plant community. The area is unique from both a hydrological and geological aspect, as both the hill and associated groundwater seepage area are features not found elsewhere in Minnesota. The fen is being considered for designation as a Scientific and Natural Area (SNA).

There are five Peatland SNA’s located within the borders of the Beltrami Island State Forest: Luxemberg, Winter Road Lake, Norris Camp, Mulligan Lake, and Red Lake Peatland SNAs. The non-peatland SNA, Gustafson’s Camp SNA, contains old growth red and white pines.

3.3 Recreational Assessment

**Developed Campgrounds** – Hayes Lake and Zippel Bay State Parks staff manage the DNR-administered campgrounds in the Beltrami Island area. Camping facilities at Hayes Lake State Park include a 35-site campground with showers, flush toilets, and some electric sites; 2 camper cabins; and a group camp. Zippel Bay State Park has a 57-site campground and a group camp. There are three primitive campgrounds (designated campsites, fire rings, vault toilets) in Beltrami Island State Forest. Bemis Hill Campground has 6 drive-in campsites, 3 horse campsites, picnic area, a shelter building, and a winter sledding hill. Blueberry Hill Campground has 8 campsites. Faunce Campground has 6 campsites.

**Dispersed Camping** - Dispersed camping is allowed on most state forest land. State Forest rules govern length of stay, waste disposal, firewood collection, and construction or improvement of campsites.

**Designated Non-motorized Recreational Trails** – Hayes Lake State Park provides signed and maintained interpretive, hiking, cross-country ski, mountain bike, and horse trails. Zippel Bay State Park has signed and maintained hiking and cross-country ski trails. The Red Lake WMA has signed walking trails for hunters and other users.

**Snowmobile Trails** - There are over 400 miles of signed and maintained snowmobile trails in and around the Beltrami Island State Forest.

**Off-Highway Vehicle Trails** - There are no existing signed and maintained OHV trails in the Beltrami Island area.

4 OHV Management Policies

The policies regulating the use of OHVs vary by management unit (State Forest, State Park, Wildlife Management Area, Scientific & Natural Area) and by vehicle type (ATV, OHM, ORV). Given the intermixed ownership pattern it can be confusing for people to determine when and where motor vehicle use is allowed. The OHV management policies for the various types of land are explained below.
4.1 Scientific & Natural Areas
Minnesota Rules Chapter 6136.0500 governs the use of motor vehicles in State Scientific and Natural Areas. OHVs are not allowed in SNAs.

4.2 State Forests
Minnesota Rules Chapter 6100.1950 governs the use of motor vehicles in State Forests. The proposed classification for the Beltrami Island State Forest is managed which means that existing routes are open to motor vehicle use unless signed closed. When using motor vehicles on unsigned routes it is illegal to operate the vehicle in a manner that causes erosion or rutting or injures, damages, or destroys trees or growing crops (MN Rules 6100.1950, Subpart 7A). The DNR will designate four areas where the hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle use exceptions in MN Statutes section 84.926 do not apply. These four areas cover a total of 11,099 acres in the Beltrami Island State Forest.

4.3 State Parks
Minnesota Rules Chapter 6100.1900 governs the use of motor vehicles in State Parks. OHVs are generally not allowed in State Parks. There are no OHV trails in the State Parks or State Recreation Areas in the Beltrami Island area.

4.4 Wildlife Management Areas
Minnesota Rules Chapter 6230.0250 governs the use of motor vehicles in State Wildlife Management Areas. With a few exceptions, OHVs are generally not allowed in State Wildlife Management Areas. Legislation passed in 2000 allows ATVs to be operated on the Blanchard, Moose River West, and Rapid River forest roads within WMAs. ATVs can also be operated on designated ATV trails located on corridors of disturbance on certain WMAs. A person licensed to take deer may operate an ATV on WMA lands defined in MN Statutes 97A.133, Subd. 3e during specified hours during the regular firearms deer season.

4.5 LUP Lands
Land Utilization Project (LUP) lands were purchased from private owners as part of a resettlement program to relocate settlers from marginal agricultural lands. LUP lands are owned by the United States Department of the Interior and leased to the MN Department of Natural Resources. The US Fish and Wildlife Service administers the lease and the terms of the lease require that the lands be managed as “a refuge and breeding ground for native birds and other wildlife.” LUP lands are not a separate management unit but instead exist within State Forests, State Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, and State Scientific and Natural Areas. Motor vehicle management on LUP lands is governed by both the conditions of the lease agreement and the policies for the surrounding management area. A dialog has been initiated with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on management of motor vehicle use in a manner that will meet the conditions of the lease agreement and the rules for the management unit in which they are located.

4.6 County Administered Forest Lands
County Land Departments, under policy established by the County Boards, manage OHV use on county administered forest lands. Legislation passed in 2003 requires that OHV management on
county administered lands within State Forest boundaries be in concert with OHV management on the state administered lands within the forest unless the County Board adopts a resolution governing OHV use on county lands. There are 160 acres of Beltrami County lands and 160 acres of Lake of the Woods County lands within the Beltrami Island State Forest.

5 Existing Forest Access Route Inventory
A Forest Route Inventory completed in 2003 documented about 1,134 miles of forest access routes in the Beltrami Island area.

5.1 Sources and Accuracy of Data
The inventory drew on many sources of information including the State Forest Road inventory, existing trail maps, and aerial photos to identify routes that showed evidence of continuing human use. Base maps were prepared and used by field inventory crews who collected information on the condition of the routes and added new routes found in the field. Where possible the forest access routes were traveled by ATVs equipped with global positioning system (GPS) units that recorded the location of the route. The field inventory crews also collected data on the width, apparent uses, and surface condition of the route. The location of observed problem areas such as encroachment on surface waters or wetlands, excessive erosion, or significant rutting was recorded.

Given the multiple sources of data, there was some duplication of information. For example a single route may be both a designated forest road and a snowmobile trail or an inventory crew member may have collected GPS location and condition data on a route that had previously been designated as a forest road and thus already existed in the database. A number of automated and visual checks were used to clean-up the travel routes data and to remove obvious duplicates.

While reasonable efforts were made to correct the travel routes data there are inherent limitations on the completeness and accuracy of the forest route inventory data. Public land ownership patterns change as lands are acquired, sold, or exchanged. Natural resource management activities, fires, and timber sales create or obliterate forest routes. Unused routes re-vegetate, beavers flood routes, and what is a passable route in a dry year maybe impassable in wet years.

5.2 Designated Forest Roads
There were 349.7 miles of State Forest Road in the existing road inventory in the Beltrami Island area when this project began. These roads were incorporated into the Forest Route inventory compiled in 2003.

5.3 Designated Recreational Trails
Snowmobile Trails – There are over 400 miles of maintained snowmobile trails in and around the Beltrami Island area. About 150 miles are located within the boundary of the Beltrami Island State Forest. The snowmobile trails cross public and private lands.

Non-motorized Recreational Trails – Hayes Lake State Park provides signed and maintained interpretive, hiking, cross-country ski, mountain bike, and horse trails. Zippel Bay State Park has signed and maintained hiking and cross-country ski trails. The Red Lake WMA has signed walking trails for hunters and other users. Non-motorized users can use most of the inventoried
About 1.6 miles have been signed and managed as hiking trails on Division of Forestry administered land in the Beltrami Island State Forest.

**Off-Highway Vehicle Trails** - There were no designated OHV trails in the Beltrami Island area when the Forest Route inventory was compiled.

### 5.4 Undesignated Routes

About 750 miles of the 1,134 miles documented in the Forest Route inventory had no previous designation as a forest road or recreational trail.

### 6 Motor Vehicle Use Classification and Areas with Limitations on Off-trail and Non-designated Trail Use

The DNR classifies State Forest lands as *managed*, *limited*, or *closed* with respect to motor vehicle use. The classifications are characterized as follows:

**Managed Forest Lands.** Forest roads and forest trails are open to recreational motor vehicle use unless posted closed. These forest lands are characterized by a low intensity of use by OHVs, a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities, widely dispersed recreational use, and little competition among visitors for recreational use of the land. Signing and enforcement restrict motor vehicle use in sensitive resource areas and on non-motorized trails. When using motor vehicles on unsigned routes it is illegal to operate the vehicle in a manner that causes erosion or rutting or injures, damages, or destroys trees or growing crops.

**Limited Forest Lands.** Forest roads are open to motor vehicles use unless posted closed. Forest trails are closed to motor vehicle use, except where designated and signed to permit specific motorized uses. These forests are characterized by moderate to high levels of motorized and non-motorized recreational use. It is necessary to designate OHV trails so that OHV use occurs only in suitable and sustainable locations.

**Closed Forest Lands.** Forest roads are open to motor vehicles licensed for highway use. No OHVs are permitted, except that OHVs may operate on frozen public waters (e.g., across lakes for ice fishing). These lands are characterized by high susceptibility to damage by recreational motor vehicle use or have a history that precludes motorized use. Areas closed to motor vehicle use by statute or regulation (e.g., State Forest lands within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness) are automatically classified as *closed*.

All State Forest lands in the Beltrami Island area are currently classified as *managed*. The DNR plans to retain the *managed* classification for the Beltrami Island State Forest and the 1,418 acres of scattered State Forest lands located in northern Beltrami County (see Appendix B).

### 6.1 Areas with Limitations on Off-trail and Non-designated Trail Use

*MN Statutes* section 84.926, subdivision 5 authorizes the Commissioner of Natural Resources to designate areas on State Forest lands where the big game hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle use exceptions do not apply. The DNR designates areas where the hunting and trapping exceptions do not apply to protect unique natural resource values and to provide diverse recreational and hunting opportunities. The DNR will designate four such areas covering a total of 11,099 acres in the Beltrami Island State Forest.
6.1.1 Bemis East and Bemis West Areas
The Bemis East & West Areas encompass a unique cedar wetlands complex with numerous natural heritage elements and the Bemis Hill recreation facilities. The existing Bemis Hill State Forest Road and a large gravel pit split this area into East and West sections. The Bemis Hill SFR is not part of the area with limitations and will continue to be open to motor vehicle use. The Bemis areas are north of the Thompson SFR and include the sledding hill and campground near Bemis Hill. Motor vehicles will still be able to access the parking areas, toilets, and well at Bemis Hill. The Bemis East Area is 4,921 acres in size (4,075 acres of State Forest land and 846 acres of LUP land). The Bemis West Area is 1,980 acres in size (1,960 acres of State Forest land and 20 acres of LUP land).

6.1.2 Hansen Creek Area
The Hansen Creek Area is a complex of upland and lowland forests, ephemeral ponds, and streams. The Hansen Creek Area is located west of Dick’s Parkway SFR, north of Hansen Creek, and south of Highwood West SFR. The designation as an area with limitations on off-trail and non-designated trail use does not affect snowmobile use in the area, either on the existing designated snowmobile trail or off-trail snowmobile use. The Hansen Creek Area is 2,957 acres in size (464 acres of State Forest land and 2,493 acres of LUP land).

6.1.3 Manweiler Dam Area
The Manweiler Dam Area includes an old growth forest stand and is adjacent to wildlife impoundments. The area contains upland and lowland forests and non-forested wetlands. The Manweiler Dam Area is 1,242 acres in size (837 acres of State Forest land and 405 acres of LUP land).

7 Forest Road and Forest Trail Designations
All inventoried forest routes on State Forest land have been designated as State Forest Roads, recreational trails, or left as non-designated routes. The designation determines what type of motor vehicle use is allowed and how the route will be signed and managed. The designations were developed to work within the framework provided by the managed motor vehicle use classification and the areas with limitations on off-trail and non-designated trail use described above.

The forest road and trail designations were developed using the forest route inventory data, local land manager’s knowledge of the routes, the proposed designation contained in the 2004 public review draft plan, and input gathered during the public review process. A work group consisting of DNR staff, County Board representatives, and US Fish & Wildlife Service staff developed the designations. For routes that had been managed as State Forest Roads or recreational trails prior to 2004, the presumption was that the previous designation and uses would be continued unless there was a compelling reason to propose changes. The work group was able to reach a consensus recommendation on the designation of most of the routes. For the routes where the work group did not reach a consensus, the DNR Northwest Regional Director made the designation decision based on information provided by the work group.
Geographic information system (GIS) tools were used to map and document the road and trail designations. Each inventoried route on State Forest land was coded to indicate which types of motor vehicles (ATVs, OHMs, ORVs, HLVs) the public would be allowed to use on the route. The primary reason for each designation was also recorded. The challenge was to develop designations that comply with existing laws and policies, adequately protect natural resources, and balance competing public desires for the management of forest lands.

### 7.1 Summary of Route Designations

The following table summarizes the designations of the inventoried forest routes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route Designation</th>
<th>Miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forest Roads</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>355.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Maintenance Roads*</td>
<td>118.7</td>
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<td><strong>Trails</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Non-motorized (hike, horse, hunting, etc.)</td>
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<td><strong>Trails</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-designated</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Routes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Closures</td>
<td>139.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Re-vegetated Paths</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated by Non-state Ownership</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Red Lake Band or private owner permission required or trespass charges may apply)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-designated</strong></td>
<td>604.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Inventoried Routes</strong> = 1,134.1 miles</td>
<td><strong>Total Inventoried Routes</strong> = 1,134.1 miles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* There are 234.4 miles of routes that were dual designated as both forest roads and ATV/OHM Trail. Thus the designation mileage does not total to the 1,134.1 miles of inventoried routes. The designation mileage totals to the inventory mileage if 234.4 miles are subtracted from either the road designation or the trail designation mileage. (ATV/OHM Trail and System Forest Road = 140.1 miles) (ATV/OHM Trail and Min. Maint. Forest Road = 94.3 miles)

### 7.2 State Forest Roads

State Forest Roads provide access to forest lands for resource management and recreation. State Forest Roads are not public highways like federal, state, county, or local highways. Forest roads are typically open to use by both highway-licensed and off-highway vehicles but are subject to closure to some or all types of vehicles at various times for safety or resource management reasons.

Forest roads are classified as ‘system’ or ‘minimum maintenance’ depending on the frequency of use and intended maintenance standards. System roads are more frequently used and will typically be graveled and maintained to a level that allows use by most highway-licensed vehicles. Minimum maintenance roads are used for forest management access on an intermittent
basis. Minimum maintenance roads will be open to motorized vehicles but not maintained to the level where low clearance highway vehicles can routinely travel on them. Minimum maintenance roads may be gated and opened only during certain times of the year.

7.2.1 System Forest Roads

There will be 355.5 miles designated as system forest roads. This is approximately the same mileage as in the pre-2003 State Forest Road inventory. There were minor adjustments to the earlier inventory to reflect recent reroutes, deletions, or additions of system forest roads.

System State Forest Roads are typically open to highway-licensed vehicles (HLV) and all three types of OHVs (i.e. ATVs, OHMs, and ORVs). Gates are present on some system forest roads and are used to control public access at certain times. Some of the system forest roads are located on Red Lake WMA lands. WMA rules typically prohibit use of OHVs on WMAs. There are 23.0 miles of system State Forest Roads located on WMA land that will be open to HLVs but closed to OHVs. The system forest roads to be closed to OHVs are the Bankton (portion west of Faunce Road), Canning, Firebreak, Moose River East, Spina, and Spina Dam Spur forest roads. Legislation enacted in 2000 requires that the Blanchard, Moose River (west of Dick’s Parkway), and Rapid River forest roads that cross WMA lands be open to ATVs. The forest road use designations in this plan are consistent with the law passed in 2000.

About 40% of the system forest road mileage (140.1 miles) will be dual designated as both system forest roads and recreational ATV/OHM trails. These dual designated routes usually have low volumes of HLV traffic. In a few cases, short segments of system forest roads with higher HLV traffic volumes will be dual designated because they provide necessary links in the recreational ATV/OHM trail system. Dual designated routes will be managed as both roads and trails with appropriate signs to indicate that the routes are shared by HLVs and OHVs.

7.2.2 Minimum Maintenance Forest Roads

There will be 118.7 miles designated as minimum maintenance forest roads. These roads will generally be available for use by both highway-licensed vehicles and all three types of OHVs. These roads provide access to forest lands but may not be passable by low clearance highway vehicles. Most of these routes (94.3 miles) will be dual designated as both minimum maintenance forest roads and recreational ATV/OHM trails. These dual designated routes will be signed and maintained as both ATV/OHM trail and forest roads and will remain open to HLVs and ORVs as well as ATVs/OHMs.

7.3 Recreational Trails

7.3.1 Nonmotorized

There will be a 47.0 miles designated as hunter walking trails. Some of these are newly designated and some were previously managed as hunter walking trails. Hunter walking trails will be signed and maintained. Motor vehicle use is prohibited on designated walking trails and these trails cannot be used by motor vehicles under the hunting and trapping exceptions in MN Statutes 84.926.
The designated walking trails are distributed across the Beltrami Island State Forest at about 20 separate locations. The longest walking trail networks include:

- 4.8 miles of trails northwest of the intersection of Dick’s Parkway and Moose River State Forest Roads. Newly designated trails will be added to the existing walking trails in this area.
- 9.5 miles of trails northeast of the intersection of Dick’s Parkway and Faunce-Butterfield State Forest Roads.
- 8.2 miles of dead end spur trails in six locations along the Bankton, Pitt Spur, and Faunce State Forest Roads.

There are also signed and maintained non-motorized trails on State Park and Wildlife Management Areas in the Beltrami Island area.

Four areas covering 11,099 acres have been designated as areas with limitations on off-trail and non-designated trail use to protect unique natural resource values and to provide diverse recreational and hunting opportunities.

Non-designated routes can also be used for non-motorized recreation but these routes are not signed or maintained for any use and motor vehicles may be encountered on some of these non-designated routes.

7.3.2 Off Highway Vehicle Trails

ATV & OHM Trails – There will be 238.9 miles designated and managed for use by ATVs and OHMs. All of these designated ATV/OHM trails will be open to class 1 ATVs, class 2 ATVs, and OHMs. Of the 238.9 miles of ATV/OHM trail, 4.5 miles will be ATV/OHM trail only, 94.3 miles will be dual designated as ATV/OHM trail and minimum maintenance forest road, and 140.1 miles will be dual designated as ATV/OHM trail and system forest road.

The planning team identified destinations and routes that have been popular with recreational riders and sought to include them along designated trails when possible.

ORV Trails – This plan does not designate any ORV trails in the Beltrami Island State Forest. The extensive wetlands and relative lack of topographic diversity result in a low suitability for recreational ORV trails. The Beltrami Island area is also a long distance from major population centers in the state. ORVs are allowed on designated system and minimum maintenance forest roads.

7.4 Non-designated Routes

Fifty-three percent (604.0 miles) of the inventoried forest routes will remain non-designated. These routes will be neither forest roads nor designated recreational trails. Under the proposed managed forest classification motor vehicle operators will be allowed to use the non-designated routes that are not signed closed and are not located in the 4 designated areas with limitations on off-trail and non-designated trail use. About two-thirds of the non-designated routes on State Forest lands in the Beltrami Island area will be “Access Routes.”
7.4.1 Proactive Closures
Some non-designated routes are not suitable for any public motor vehicle use. There will be 139.8 miles of non-designated routes that will be proactively closed and will have signs, gates, or barricades to indicate that public motor vehicle use is no longer allowed. Non-designated routes that are proactively closed or are located in areas with limitations on off-trail and non-designated trail use are not available for motor vehicle use under the hunting and trapping exceptions.

7.4.2 Access Routes
There will be 399.6 miles of non-designated Access Routes. The absence of a sign, gate, or barricade does not mean that a non-designated Access Route is suitable for motor vehicle use. Non-designated Access Routes are available for non-motorized and motorized use in an “as is” condition with the user responsible for ensuring that there is no damage to the route. It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle in a manner that causes erosion or rutting or injures, damages, or destroys trees or growing crops (MN Rules 6100.1950, Subpart 7A) on these routes. Some routes may become impassable due to beaver flooding or re-vegetation. Non-designated routes will be monitored incidentally by DNR staff conducting field work and those routes that are damaged by motor vehicle use will be subject to proactive closure.

7.4.3 Re-vegetated Paths
Vegetation has re-grown on some of the inventoried routes to the point that continued use of the route is unlikely. Data on 45.0 miles of these re-vegetated paths will be archived and removed from the active forest route inventory.

7.4.4 Isolated by Non-state Ownership (Red Lake Band Lands or other private lands)
There are 19.6 miles of inventoried routes that are located near non-public lands and cannot be accessed without permission from the non-state landowner. Data for these isolated routes that require permission from the Red Lake Band of the Chippewa Tribal Council or private landowners will be archived and removed from the active forest route inventory.

7.5 Maps
The routes designations for the Beltrami Island State Forest are depicted on a series of township level maps which are available for viewing and printing on the DNR website. A compact disc containing Portable Document Format (PDF) files of the maps is available on request. The route designation maps are incorporated in this plan by reference.

8 ANTICIPATED IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

8.1 Publication of Classification and Road / Trail Designation Orders
The Commissioner of Natural Resources will publish Commissioner’s Orders in the State Register to:
1. Classify State Forest lands with respect to motor vehicle use and designate areas with limitations on off-trail and non-designated trail use (MN Statutes section 84.926, subd. 5),
2. Designate and undesignate State Forest Roads, and
3. Designate OHV and non-motorized recreational trails.
The Commissioner’s Orders will include effective dates for the classification and designations.

8.2 Road & Trail Development and Signing Projects
After the Commissioner publishes the classification and designation orders, the DNR will implement the plan by developing and signing the designated roads and trails. Required permits will be obtained when site-level development projects are implemented.

8.3 Substantial Completion & Signing of Motorized Roads & Trails
The DNR is committed to substantially completing the development and signing of designated roads and trails prior to effective date in the Commissioner’s Orders. Completion of some of the designated roads and trails may be delayed due to unexpected physical, time, or cost constraints. When the development and signing projects are completed, the DNR will publicize the availability of the roads and trails and publish updated maps.

8.4 Expected Effective Date
The DNR will try to substantially complete the development and signing of designated roads and trails within one year after publication of the Commissioner’s Orders. The effective date will likely be December 31, 2007.

8.5 Ongoing Monitoring and Management
The DNR is committed to providing both motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities on State Forest lands. A guiding principle for recreational trails is ‘managed use on managed trails.’ The intent is to provide quality recreational experiences on environmentally sustainable non-motorized and motorized trails. The DNR will use approved best management practices for forest roads and trails.

The DNR will monitor designated roads and trails for maintenance needs and sustainability. Education and enforcement will be used to ensure compliance with road and trail use designations. The level of user satisfaction and user conflicts will be monitored and future adjustments in the motor vehicle use classification and trail use designations may be proposed.

Roads and trails may be temporarily closed as warranted by weather conditions (for example, during Spring breakup, high fire hazard, after extreme storm events) or while needed repairs are made. Permanent changes to the designated trail system (change in allowed uses, addition or deletion of designated trails) will be subject to public review and comment.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A. Minnesota Statutes and Rules Related to State Forest Classification

Minnesota Laws 2003, Chapter 128, Article 1, Section 167 as amended by Minnesota Laws 2005, 1st Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 2, Section 152
Sec. 167. [FOREST LAND OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE USE RECLASSIFICATION.]
Subdivision 1. [FOREST CLASSIFICATION STATUS REVIEW.]
(a) By December 31, 2006, the commissioner of natural resources shall complete a review of the forest classification status of all state forests classified as managed or limited, all forest lands under the authority of the commissioner as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 89.001, subdivision 13, and lands managed by the commissioner under Minnesota Statutes, section 282.011. The review must be conducted on a forest-by-forest and area-by-area basis in accordance with the process and criteria under Minnesota Rules, part 6100.1950. Except as provided in paragraph (d), after each forest is reviewed, the commissioner must change its status to limited or closed, and must provide a similar status for each of the other areas subject to review under this section after each individual review is completed.

(b) If the commissioner determines on January 1, 2005, that the review required under this section cannot be completed by December 31, 2006, the completion date for the review shall be extended to December 31, 2008. By January 15, 2005, the commissioner shall report to the chairs of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over natural resources policy and finance regarding the status of the process required by this section.

(c) Until December 31, 2010, the state forests and areas subject to review under this section are exempt from Minnesota Statutes, section 84.777, unless an individual forest or area has been classified as limited or closed.

(d) Notwithstanding the restrictions in paragraph (a), and Minnesota Statutes, section 84.777, all forest lands under the authority of the commissioner as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 89.001, subdivision 13, and lands managed by the commissioner under Minnesota Statutes, section 282.011, that are north of U.S. Highway 2 shall maintain their present classification unless the commissioner reclassifies the lands under Minnesota Rules, part 6100.1950. The commissioner shall provide for seasonal trail closures when conditions warrant them. By December 31, 2008, the commissioner shall complete the review and designate trails on forest lands north of Highway 2 as provided in this section.

Subdivision 2. [TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW.]
The requirements for environmental review under Minnesota Statutes, section 116D.04, and rules of the environmental quality board are temporarily suspended for each reclassification and trail designation made under subdivision 1 until the commissioner has met all requirements under subdivision 1, or December 31, 2008, if the commissioner has failed to complete those requirements as required by law.

Minnesota Rules Chapter 6100.1950, subparts 1 – 4

6100.1950 MOTOR VEHICLES AND SNOWMOBILES; FOREST LANDS.

Subpart 1. Classified forest lands. The operation of motor vehicles and snowmobiles on forest lands classified by the commissioner for purposes of motor vehicle use according to subpart 2 and Minnesota Statutes, section 89.002, is regulated according to items A to C.

A. Motor vehicles may operate on forest lands classified as managed on forest roads and forest trails that are not posted and designated closed, subject to the limitations and exceptions in this part.

B. Motor vehicles may operate on forest lands classified as limited only on forest roads that are not posted and designated closed and on forest trails or areas that are posted and designated to allow motor vehicle use, subject to the limitations and exceptions in this part.

C. No person shall operate a motor vehicle or snowmobile on forest lands classified as closed, unless on frozen public waters where operation is not otherwise prohibited. Motor vehicles that are licensed for use on public highways may be operated on forest roads that are not posted or gated closed. Snowmobiles may operate on designated trails.
Subp. 2. **Criteria for classification.** The following criteria shall be considered when classifying forest lands for motor vehicle use:

A. resource sensitivity and management objectives;
B. resource impact by motorized and nonmotorized use, including erosion, rutting, and impacts on vegetation, wildlife, air, water, or natural habitats;
C. motorized and nonmotorized recreational opportunity in area;
D. user needs, such as trails, parking, signs, and access;
E. the degree and trend of motor vehicle use in the area;
F. the degree and trend of nonmotor vehicle use in the area;
G. competing interests among different user groups; and
H. public safety and law enforcement concerns.

Subp. 3. **Notice and public meeting.** Before changing the classification of forest lands for motor vehicle use, the commissioner shall provide notice and a public meeting according to items A to C.

A. A public meeting shall be held in the county where the largest portion of the forest lands are located to provide information to and receive comment from the public regarding the proposed classification change.

B. Sixty days before the public meeting, notice of the proposed classification change shall be published in legal newspapers that serve the counties in which the lands are located and in a statewide Department of Natural Resources news release and in the State Register. The notice shall include a summary of the proposed action, a request for public comment, and notice of the public meeting.

C. Twenty-one days before the public meeting, notice of the meeting shall be announced in a statewide Department of Natural Resources news release.

Subp. 4. **Commissioner’s decision.** The commissioner shall make a decision about the proposed classification change after considering the criteria listed in subpart 2 and any public comment received and explaining how the nature and magnitude of the criteria and comments relate to the classification.

Subp. 5. **Nonmotorized trails.** No person shall operate a motor vehicle or snowmobile on forest lands on a designated nonmotorized trail, including ski, foot, horse, bike, or accessible trail, unless the trail is also posted open for a motorized use.

Subp. 6. **Lakes, rivers, and streams.** No person shall operate a motor vehicle on forest lands on or over the beds of lakes, rivers, or streams when ice is not covering the water body, except on a bridge, culvert, or similar structure or designated low water crossing.

Subp. 7. **Other prohibitions and exceptions.**

A. No person shall operate a motor vehicle or snowmobile on forest lands in a manner that causes erosion or rutting or injures, damages, or destroys trees or growing crops. The rutting prohibition does not apply on trails that are designated and maintained for motorized use.

B. No person shall operate motor vehicles or snowmobiles on forest lands within the boundaries of an area that is posted and designated as closed to the operation of motor vehicles or snowmobiles.

C. No person shall operate a motor vehicle or snowmobile in the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest, except on forest roads that are not posted and designated as closed, and on forest trails or areas that are posted and designated to allow the use of motor vehicles or snowmobiles. The exception under item D does not apply.

D. Except as provided in item C, on forest lands classified as managed or limited, a person may use an ATV off forest trails in a manner consistent with this subpart when lawfully:
(1) engaged in hunting big game or constructing hunting stands during October, November, and December;

(2) retrieving big game during September; or

(3) trapping during open seasons.

E. No person shall construct an unauthorized permanent trail on forest lands.

F. Subpart 1 does not apply to motor vehicles used to carry out silvicultural activities, including timber cruising, and the harvest and transport of forest products for commercial purposes.

G. The commissioner may grant a variance from the requirements of subpart 1 to private landowners and leaseholders when the only reasonable access to their land is across state forest lands.

Subp. 8. **Forest roads.**

A. A motor vehicle on a forest road shall travel at a speed that is reasonable and prudent. It is a violation of this part to exceed a posted speed limit.

B. All posted parking and traffic regulations, including signs designating speed limits, stop signs, one-way traffic, and do not enter, shall be obeyed on a forest road.

C. No person, passenger, or operator of a motor vehicle shall travel on or along a forest road that is designated as closed with signs, barricaded, or blocked with a gate.

D. Removing snow from a forest road is prohibited when the road is posted for no snow removal.

E. No person shall operate, nor shall an owner permit the operation of a motor vehicle, on a forest road or trail in a manner that causes damage to the road, land, or other natural resources.

**Minnesota Statutes 2005, Section 84.777**

**84.777 Off-highway vehicle use of state lands restricted.**

(a) Except as otherwise allowed by law or rules adopted by the commissioner, effective June 1, 2003, notwithstanding sections 84.787 to 84.805 and 84.92 to 84.929, the use of off-highway vehicles is prohibited on state land administered by the commissioner of natural resources, and on county-administered forest land within the boundaries of a state forest, except on roads and trails specifically designated and posted by the commissioner for use by off-highway vehicles.

(b) Paragraph (a) does not apply to county-administered land within a state forest if the county board adopts a resolution that modifies restrictions on the use of off-highway vehicles on county-administered land within the forest.

HIST: 2003 c 128 art 1 s 21
## Appendix B: Lands Near Beltrami Island State Forest Included in the Classification Review

The following table lists parcels of DNR-Division of Forestry-administered lands located outside of the Beltrami Island State Forest in northern Beltrami County that are proposed to be classified as *managed* with respect to motor vehicle use.

GLTMCH column is a geocoded field that ties to the public land survey: County # = first digit (4 = Beltrami); Township N = second to fourth digits; Range W = fifth to seventh digits; Section = eighth and ninth digits; Forty code = tenth and eleventh digits; Government Lot = twelfth and thirteenth digits

LACRES column is parcel acreage as recorded in DNR land ownership records.

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Source: State Land – Division of Forestry land ownership from DNR GIS DRS on 18AUG2004.