Forest Classification

and

Forest Road and Trail Designations

for

State Forest Lands in and Near the

Chippewa National Forest

Public Review Draft
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 DNR will review the motor vehicle use classification and designate forest roads and trails on all State Forest lands in Minnesota. This plan covers State Forest lands in and near the Chippewa National Forest in north-central Minnesota. The DNR’s Chippewa planning unit is located in southeastern Beltrami, northern Cass, and northwestern Itasca counties ([Location Map](#)). The planning unit covers slightly over 2 million acres, including water-covered areas.

Given the intermingled private, county, state, and federal land ownership pattern in the Chippewa area, the DNR coordinated its work with citizens, the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, County Boards and Land Departments, and the US Forest Service. The recommended classifications and designations were developed by an interagency group involving county, state, and federal forest land managers. While this plan documents recommendations for both state- and county-administered lands, the Commissioner of Natural Resources will only classify and designate routes on DNR-administered lands. County lands are managed by the respective counties.

Lands Covered by this Plan

There are seven named State Forests with statutorily defined boundaries within the planning unit. These seven [State Forests](#) have a gross acreage of about 953,000 acres, of which about 237,000 acres administered by the DNR Division of Forestry are covered by this review. There are about 83,000 acres of forest land administered by the DNR Division of Forestry outside of the State Forest boundaries within the Chippewa planning unit. These lands are managed the same as State Forest lands within the boundaries of named forests. These 320,000 acres are the lands that will be classified and have roads and trails designated by Commissioners Order.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Forest</th>
<th>Gross Acreage</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th>Leech Lake Band</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Battleground</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>9,400</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Fork</td>
<td>127,900</td>
<td>44,800</td>
<td>11,800</td>
<td>39,600</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackduck</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>39,700</td>
<td>9,400</td>
<td>48,100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowstring</td>
<td>526,600</td>
<td>116,200</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>236,600</td>
<td>17,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buena Vista</td>
<td>122,300</td>
<td>18,600</td>
<td>17,100</td>
<td>26,600</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remer</td>
<td>12,900</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>9,300</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh Lake</td>
<td>19,800</td>
<td>6,100</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>952,500</td>
<td>237,200</td>
<td>46,700</td>
<td>362,200</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to State Forest lands there are 666,000 acres of Chippewa National Forest land and 148,000 acres of county forest lands within the DNR’s Chippewa planning unit. There are also DNR Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, Scientific and Natural Areas, and State Trails located in the Chippewa area.

### Proposed Motor Vehicle Use Classifications

All State Forest land will be classified as managed, limited, or closed with respect to use of motor vehicles by the public. The proposed classifications are:

- **Battleground State Forest** – closed
- **Big Fork State Forest** – managed with a Non-motorized Access Area in the Dishpan – Fiske Lake area
- **Blackduck State Forest** – managed with a Non-motorized Access Area NE of Morph Meadows
- **Bowstring State Forest** – limited with a Non-motorized Access Area around Drumbeater Lake
- **Buena Vista State Forest** – limited except for one section of land on the east side of Lake Bemidji adjacent to the city of Bemidji which is closed.
- **Remer State Forest** – limited with a Non-motorized Access Area on the east side of the forest.
- **Welsh Lake State Forest** – closed
- **Scattered State Forest Lands in SE Beltrami County** – managed
- **Scattered State Forest Lands in Northern Cass County** – limited
- **Scattered State Forest Lands in NW Itasca County** – managed except lands south of US Highway 2 which are proposed for limited classification.

### Forest Route Inventory

The forest route inventory showed 740 miles of routes on State Forest land and 326 miles of routes on County Forest land within the DNR’s Chippewa planning unit.
### Forest Access Routes on State and County Land in the DNR Chippewa Project Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route Designation</th>
<th>State Forest Miles</th>
<th>County Forest Miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Battleground</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Fork</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackduck</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowstring</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buena Vista</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh Lake</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of State Forest</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>740</strong></td>
<td><strong>326</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chippewa GIS Travel Route Data 28JUN2006

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**Proposed Road and Trail Designations**

The forest road and trail designations for State Forest lands proposed in this plan were developed by an interagency team using the travel route inventory data, local land manager’s knowledge of the routes, and public input gathered during the open house meetings in January 2006. About a dozen interagency working sessions were held during February and March 2006 to develop a consensus recommendation for presentation to each agency and the public. The challenge was to propose an understandable system that complies with existing laws and policies, adequately protects natural resources, and serves public demands.

### Forest Road and Trail Designation Mileage Summary for State and County Land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route Designation</th>
<th>State Forest Land (miles)</th>
<th>County Forest Land (miles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>System Forest Road</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Min. Maintenance Forest Road</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Forest Road</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to HLV &amp; OHV</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Use Analysis</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to HLV / Closed to ATV</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-designated Routes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Closures</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In <em>closed</em> forests</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In <em>limited</em> forests</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In <em>managed</em> forests (Access)</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ATV Trail</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soo Line North (50 miles)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to &lt; 1,000 pound</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OHM Trail</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ORV Trail</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-motorized Trails</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* It is anticipated that additional OHV Trails will be designated in a future collaborative planning effort involving the US Forest Service, DNR, and the counties.
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 the 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 with 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.

Process

In November 2005, an interdisciplinary team with members from the DNR divisions of Ecological Services, Enforcement, Fish & Wildlife, Forestry, and Trails & Waterways was established to complete the following tasks:

1. Collaborate with the public and other forest management agencies to develop a plan for the management of public motor vehicle use on forest lands in the planning area.
2. Consider the criteria for classification of State Forest lands for motor vehicle use and recommend an appropriate classification.
3. Evaluate the inventoried forest access routes and propose designation of forest roads and trails for various uses.
4. Present the team’s recommendations for motor vehicle use classification and forest road and trail designations for public review and comment.
The major steps in developing the road and trail designation proposals were:

1. Compile an inventory of forest access routes – roads, trails, and other routes showing evidence of ongoing human use. Prepare maps showing the travel routes.
2. Co-host a series of public open houses to let people know about the road and trail designation process, to gain an understanding of how people use the access routes, and to collect input on the potential designation of various routes.
3. Interagency working sessions to make preliminary designation and use recommendations based on inventory data, staff knowledge, and public input from the open houses.
4. Review preliminary designations and identify potential corridors and areas for designated recreational OHV trails.
5. Prepare designation plans and maps for internal agency and public review and comment.

Given the intermingled private, county, state, and federal land ownership pattern in the Chippewa area, the DNR team coordinated its work with citizens, the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, County Boards and Land Departments, and the US Forest Service. The goal was to develop an ecologically sustainable and socially acceptable approach to recreational motor vehicle use on State Forest lands. The team worked within existing legal guidelines for management of State Forest lands and current agency policies and management plans for the various types of public forest lands. Individuals have widely varying values and expectations related to the use of public forest lands. In our diverse society there is no recreational motor vehicle management approach that will fully satisfy all interests.

**DESCRIPTION OF LANDS COVERED BY THIS PLAN**

Between 2003 and 2008, the DNR will review the motor vehicle use classification and designate forest roads and trails on all State Forest lands in Minnesota. This plan covers State Forest lands in and near the Chippewa National Forest in north-central Minnesota.

**Location, Acreage, and Ownership**

The DNR’s Chippewa planning unit is located in southeastern Beltrami, northern Cass, and northwestern Itasca counties (Location Map). The planning unit covers slightly over 2 million acres, including water-covered areas.

**National Forest**

The boundaries of the Chippewa National Forest enclose about 1.6 million acres of land. The U.S. Forest Service manages about 666,000 acres of land within the Chippewa National Forest.

**State Forests**

There are seven named State Forests with statutorily defined boundaries within the planning unit. These seven [State Forests](#) have a gross acreage of about 953,000 acres, of which about 237,000 acres administered by the DNR Division of Forestry are covered by this review.

There are about 83,000 acres of forest land administered by the DNR Division of Forestry outside of the State Forest boundaries within the Chippewa planning unit. These lands are managed the same as State Forest lands within the boundaries of named forests.
County Lands
The Land Departments of Beltrami, Cass, and Itasca counties manage about 148,000 acres of land within the Chippewa planning unit.

Leech Lake Reservation
The Leech Lake Reservation boundary encompasses about 864,000 acres in and near the DNR’s Chippewa planning unit. The Leech Lake Band owns about 17,000 acres within the reservation.

PROPOSED MOTOR VEHICLE USE CLASSIFICATION
**Minnesota Law** requires the Commissioner of Natural Resources to complete a review of the classification of State Forest lands for motor vehicle use by December 31, 2008. The process and criteria for forest classification are contained in **Minnesota Rules**.

The State Forest motor vehicle use classifications are characterized as follows:

**Managed Forest Lands.** All state 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 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 designated non-motorized recreational trails. ATVs may be operated on non-designated routes and off trail under the hunting and trapping exceptions. ORVs and HLVs may be operated on non-designated routes under the hunting and trapping exceptions. 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. The managed classification can only be applied to forest lands north of US Highway 2.

**Limited Forest Lands.** Forest roads are open to motor vehicle use unless posted closed. Forest trails are closed to motor vehicle use, except where designated and signed to permit specific motorized uses. These forest lands 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. ATVs may be operated on non-designated routes and off trail under the hunting and trapping exceptions. ORVs and HLVs may be operated on non-designated routes under the hunting and trapping exceptions.

**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). Snowmobiles may operate on designated trails. These lands are characterized by high susceptibility to damage by motorized use or have a history that precludes motorized use. Areas closed to motor vehicle use by statute or regulations (e.g., State Forest lands within the BWCAW) are automatically classified as ‘closed.’ The hunting and trapping exceptions do not apply in closed forests.

The following criteria are 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.

**Lands Covered by this Classification Review**

This motor vehicle use classification review covers State Forest lands in and near the Chippewa National Forest in north-central Minnesota. The DNR’s Chippewa planning unit is located in southeastern Beltrami, northern Cass, and northwestern Itasca counties ([Location Map](#)). The planning unit covers slightly over 2 million acres, including water-covered areas.

**Inside State Forest Boundaries**

There are seven named State Forests with statutorily defined boundaries within the planning unit. These seven State Forests have a gross acreage of about 953,000 acres, of which about 237,000 acres administered by the DNR Division of Forestry are covered by this review. [Minnesota Statutes 84.777](#) applies the State Forest classification and road/trail designation process to county-administered forest lands within the boundaries of State Forests unless the county board adopts a resolution that modifies restrictions on the use of off-highway vehicles on county-administered land within the forest. The County Boards of Beltrami, Cass, and Itasca counties have not adopted resolutions modifying restrictions on OHV use on county-administered forest lands within State Forests. Thus, this classification review also covers about 47,000 acres of county-administered land within these seven State Forests.

The motor vehicle use classification and related State Forest rules do not apply on federal, tribal, or private lands within State Forest boundaries. The classification and rules do not apply to the rights-of-way of public highways within State Forest boundaries, which are under the jurisdiction of state, county, or local public road authorities. The classification and rules do not apply to state lands administered by DNR divisions other than the Division of Forestry, such as State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, Scientific & Natural Areas, or State Trails.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Forest</th>
<th>Gross Acreage</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th>Leech Lake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Battleground</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>9,400</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Fork</td>
<td>127,900</td>
<td>44,800</td>
<td>11,800</td>
<td>39,600</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>Blackduck</td>
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<td>48,100</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>526,600</td>
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<td>6,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buena Vista</td>
<td>122,300</td>
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<td>26,600</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remer</td>
<td>12,900</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>9,300</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh Lake</td>
<td>19,800</td>
<td>6,100</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>952,500</strong></td>
<td><strong>237,200</strong></td>
<td><strong>46,700</strong></td>
<td><strong>362,200</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Outside of State Forest Boundaries**

There are about 83,000 acres of forest land administered by the DNR Division of Forestry outside of the State Forest boundaries within the Chippewa planning unit. These lands are treated as State Forest land and are covered by this classification review.

There are about 100,000 acres of county-administered forest land outside of State Forest boundaries within the DNR’s Chippewa planning unit. This classification review does not apply to these county-administered lands.

This motor vehicle use classification does not apply on federal, tribal, or private lands outside of State Forest boundaries. The classification and rules do not apply to state lands administered by DNR divisions other than the Division of Forestry, such as State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, Scientific & Natural Areas, or State Trails.

**Classification Process**

DNR Chippewa Team members reviewed the classification criteria, collected data related to classification, and gathered input from other DNR staff and the public. Various classification proposals were developed and discussed.

The initial interagency work group meetings were held to develop preliminary road and trail use recommendations before the team had agreed on a classification framework. The team participated in the work group meetings using a presumption of a *managed* classification for the Big Fork and Blackduck State Forests and a *limited* classification for other forests. The team agreed to modify the initial road and trail use recommendations as needed depending on the final classification.

During the process of developing the preliminary road and trail use recommendations, team members agreed that some State Forest lands located in areas with existing non-motorized status should be closed to public motor vehicle use to maintain a uniform policy for these areas. This meant that the team did not designate OHV trails in these areas and that the exception that allows use of motor vehicles for specific hunting and trapping related activities would not apply. Examples of these areas include designated semi-primitive non-motorized management areas on the Chippewa National Forest (Suomi Hills, Trout Lake, North Winnie), State Wildlife Management Areas and previously *closed* State Forest land near Bemidji.

Team members discussed forest classification alternatives at meetings on March 14 and April 19, 2006. For significant portions of the planning area, it became clear that multiple classification options were possible depending on which classification criteria, resource condition, or management objective was given priority. For example, a *limited* classification might be indicated for an area if priority were given to reducing resource impacts of motorized use or maintaining similar motor vehicle use guidelines for federal and state lands while a *managed* classification would be indicated if priority were given to maintaining existing patterns/levels of motorized access and reducing the need for signs in the area.
Recommended Classifications

The DNR Chippewa Road & Trail Designation Team discussed alternative classification proposals and developed consensus classification recommendations for State Forest lands in the planning area. The primary reasons supporting the classification recommendation for each State Forest are presented below. The team recommends that the Commissioner of Natural Resources classify State Forest lands within the planning area as follows:

Battleground State Forest – Closed

The majority of the DNR-administered land in this forest consists of an extensive forested wetland located between the Boy River/Boy Bay of Leech Lake on the south and Leech Lake/Leech Lake River on the north. County Highway 73 crosses the wetland and serves the Leech Lake Band community in the Battle Point, Sugar Point, and Fivemile Point areas.

The Soo Line North Trail crosses a corner of the Battleground State Forest. The primary designated uses of the Soo Line North Trail are snowmobiling and ATV riding. The trail crosses a single 40 of private land (NENE-S24-T143-R28) in the forest about 3 miles southeast of Federal Dam. By definition there are no OHV trails on DNR-administered land in a closed forest. The Soo Line North Trail is not a DNR trail; it is on a former railroad grade owned and operated as a GIA trail in this section by Cass County. The Soo Line North is also a snowmobile trail. The Triville GIA snowmobile Trail also crosses the Battleground State Forest and intersects with the Soo Line North Trail. The Triville snowmobile trail appears to cross some state land within the forest. Thus, given the State Forest rule language about snowmobiles on designated trails in closed forests the Triville snowmobile trail would have to be included in the Commissioner's Order designating trails.

A portion of the Battleground State Forest (including most of the residential properties on Leech Lake in the Battle Point, Sugar Point, and Fivemile Point areas) is within the Leech Lake Indian Reservation.

While the planning team recommends a closed classification for the Battleground State Forest it could also support a limited classification given the presence of the Soo Line North Trail, the Triville Trail, the current level of OHV use, and the presence of private, tribal, county, and federal lands within the State Forest boundary. The primary difference between the closed and limited classifications in this forest would be whether or not the hunting and trapping exceptions apply. The planning team recommends further analysis based on public comments received during the plan review period.

Big Fork State Forest – Managed

The Big Fork State Forest is primarily a mixture of state, federal, county, and industrial forest lands with relatively few lakes. There is a significant acreage of wetlands but they occur on till plains and moraines and are intermixed with uplands. The wetlands are not as extensive as they are on the lake plain portions of the planning area. Existing OHV use patterns are mostly for forest access during hunting seasons. The level of recreational use is lower than in the more populated, lake-rich portions of the Chippewa area.
There are DNR-Forestry administered lands in and adjacent to the Dishpan WMA, Lost 40 SNA, and the Chippewa National Forest’s Fiske Lake management unit. The planning team recommends that the hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle uses permitted by MS 84.926 not apply on DNR-Forestry administered lands in the Dishpan – Fiske Lake area. See the No Hunting Exception map and the description of the boundaries of the Dishpan – Fiske Lake area. This area is located in the southwest corner of the Big Fork State Forest and adjacent lands outside of State Forest boundaries in Itasca County.

**Blackduck State Forest – Managed**

The western and eastern portions of this State Forest are primarily glacial moraines and till plains with rolling topography and a moderate number of lakes and wetlands. The central portion of the forest (around the Third River flowage and Morph Lake) is a lake plain with extensive wetlands. DNR-administered land is concentrated in the central portion of the forest, with federal forest lands being more prevalent in the western and eastern portions. Existing OHV use patterns are mostly for forest access during hunting seasons. The level of recreational use is lower than in the more populated, lake-rich portions of the Chippewa area.

There are DNR-Forestry administered lands in and adjacent to the Morph Meadows WMA which is located in the south central part of the Blackduck State Forest. As a WMA this area will continue to be managed as closed to motor vehicles except for highway-licensed vehicles (HLVs) operating on roads that are signed as open for use by HLVs. The hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle uses permitted by MS 84.926 will not apply on DNR-Forestry administered lands within the Morph Meadows WMA. There is an extensive wetland area to the north and east of the Morph Meadows WMA that is mostly State Forest land. The planning team recommends that the hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle uses permitted by MS 84.926 not apply on DNR-Forestry administered lands in the Morph Meadows NE area. See the No Hunting Exception map and the description of the boundaries of the Morph Meadows NE zone.

**Bowstring State Forest – Limited**

The Bowstring State Forest is in the center of the Chippewa National Forest and includes all of Lake Winnibigoshish and parts of Leech and Cass lakes. The ratio of federal to state forest land acreage is about 2:1. State-administered land is concentrated in the extensive wetland areas south of Lake Winnie and north of the Leech Lake River (Bena Dunes & Peatlands landtype association) and between Ball Club and Bowstring lakes (Rosey Lake Plain landtype association). US Highway 2 bisects the forest. Resources sensitive to disturbance by motor vehicle use (lakes, wetlands, rare plant communities) are prevalent in this portion of the Chippewa planning area. Lake-oriented recreation is very high.

Drumbeater Lake is a state waterfowl refuge located within the Bowstring State Forest boundary. The lake is surrounded by extensive wetlands located on State Forest and Chippewa National Forest lands. The planning team recommends that the hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle uses permitted by MS 84.926 not apply on DNR-Forestry administered lands around Drumbeater Lake. See the No Hunting Exception map and the description of the boundaries of the Drumbeater Lake zone.
The Chippewa National Forest’s Suomi Hills Semi-primitive Non-motorized (SPNM) management area is located within the boundary of the Bowstring State Forest. There are some DNR-Forestry administered lands in and adjacent to the Suomi Hills SPNM area.

**Buena Vista State Forest – Limited**

About half of the land within the boundaries of the Buena Vista State Forest is privately owned. There are a number of medium-sized lakes in the forest and the proximity to Bemidji results in a higher population density than other portions of the Chippewa planning area. The largest block of contiguous state-administered land is north of Turtle and Three Island lakes. In the rest of the State Forest, state-administered lands are mostly scattered tracts of less than a section (640 acres) intermixed with federal forest lands in the eastern portion of the forest and county or private lands in the western portion of the forest. Existing levels of non-motorized and motorized recreation are relatively high compared to other portions of the Chippewa planning area. The Buena Vista State Forest is located north of US Highway 2.

Section 36 of T147N-R33W (Northern Township) is part of the Buena Vista State Forest. This section is located on the east side of Lake Bemidji and is bordered by the City of Bemidji on the south. This section was classified as closed in 2001 to stop inappropriate motor vehicle use that was occurring on this land. This section of the Buena Vista State Forest will retain the closed classification that is currently in effect.

**Remer State Forest – Limited**

With a gross area of about 13,000 acres, the Remer State Forest is the smallest of the seven State Forests within the Chippewa planning area. About 75% of the land within the State Forest is administered by the US Forest Service as part of the Chippewa National Forest. The DNR administers 2,400 acres and Cass County administers 600 acres within the forest. There are about 240 acres of private lands. The ecological landtypes in the forest are moraines and till plains. There is a fairly large wetland in the eastern portion of the forest. State Highway 6 crosses the forest. Existing levels of motorized recreational use are moderate.

The planning team recommends designating the eastern portion of the Remer State Forest north of the South Fork of the Willow River as a Non-motorized Access Area so that the hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle uses permitted by MS 84.926 will not be allowed. See the [No Hunting Exception](#) map and the description of the boundaries of the [Willow River Non-motorized Access Area](#). The Willow River area is part of the Chippewa National Forest’s North Fork Unique Area that is a low-lying area with many wetlands and an absence of improved roads. The primary characteristic of this area is the remoteness from improved roads and other developments, and hence, the opportunity for solitude and challenge, and the opportunity to experience a relatively unmanaged landscape. The proposed area surrounds the Willow Lake Deer Yard WMA.

**Welsh Lake State Forest – Closed**

Over half of the 20,000 acres within the boundaries of the Welsh Lake State Forest are private or tribal lands. The major block of DNR-administered land is in a large wetland located between Steamboat Lake and Steamboat Bay of Leech Lake. The Heartland State Trail parallels State
Highway 371 through the forest. Existing levels of non-motorized and motorized recreation are relatively high compared to other portions of the Chippewa planning area.

**Scattered State Forest Lands in SE Beltrami County – Managed**

The DNR’s Chippewa planning area includes 16 public land survey townships in southeastern Beltrami County (Townships 146N – 149N, Ranges 30W – 33W, inclusive). Three of these townships (T147N-R30W, T147N-R31W, and T148N-R32W) are completely within the boundary of the Buena Vista State Forest and one township (T148N-R30W) is completely within the Blackduck State Forest. The remaining 12 townships are completely or partially outside of any named State Forest. There are about 7,000 acres of DNR-Forestry administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest boundaries that are managed as State Forest land and thus need to be classified for motor vehicle use.

Most of these tracts are too small to have designated recreational trails. A managed classification will allow both motor vehicle and non-motorized use of existing access routes on these lands without requiring that the routes be signed. Existing State Forest rules prohibit operation of motor vehicle in a manner that causes erosion, rutting, or damage to trees or growing crops while using non-designated access routes. The managed classification is similar to the ‘open unless signed closed’ management strategy that Beltrami County has adopted for most of the lands it manages outside of State Forests in this portion of the county.

A portion of T146N-R33W (Bemidji Township) is located south of US Highway 2. Any State Forest land south of US Highway 2 has to be classified as limited or closed under existing laws. There are no State Forest lands south of US Highway 2 in this township.

**Scattered State Forest Lands in Northern Cass County – Limited**

The DNR’s Chippewa planning area includes all land north of the boundary between townships in T140N and T141N (the southern boundary of the Chippewa National Forest) in Cass County. This area includes all or parts of 37 public land survey townships. All of the Battleground, Remer, and Welsh Lake State Forests and part of the Bowstring State Forest are located in this portion of Cass County. There are over 30,000 acres of DNR-Forestry administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest boundaries in northern Cass County that are managed as State Forest land and thus need to be classified for motor vehicle use.

The limited classification is similar to the ‘closed unless signed open’ motor vehicle management strategy that is in effect for surrounding Cass County and US Forest Service administered lands. Most of the scattered State Forest lands in northern Cass County are south of US Highway 2, and their classification must be either limited or closed.

There are DNR-Forestry administered lands in and adjacent to the Mud Goose WMA. This area will continue to be managed as closed to motor vehicles except for highway-licensed vehicles (HLVs) operating on roads that are signed as open for use by HLVs. The hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle uses permitted by MS 84.926 will not apply on DNR-Forestry administered lands within the Mud Goose WMA.
Scattered State Forest Lands in NW Itasca County – Managed

The DNR’s Chippewa planning area includes lands outside of the boundaries of named State Forests in the northern and western portions of Itasca County. There are about 48,000 acres of DNR-Forestry administered lands in scattered tracts outside of State Forest boundaries. About 31,000 of these acres are located inside the boundaries of the Chippewa National Forest; the remainder are outside of the Chippewa National Forest near the communities of Big Fork, Blackduck, and Deer River.

A *managed* classification will allow both motor vehicle and non-motorized use of existing access routes on these lands without requiring that the routes be signed. Existing State Forest rules prohibit operation of motor vehicle in a manner that causes erosion, rutting, or damage to trees or growing crops while using non-designated access routes. The *managed* classification is similar to the ‘open unless signed closed’ management strategy that Itasca County has adopted for most of the lands it manages in the county. The majority of the scattered State Forest lands are also near the Big Fork and Blackduck State Forests that will be classified as *managed*.

The Dishpan – Fiske Lake area in and adjacent to the Big Fork State Forest will continue the non-motorized management direction that has been established for this area. The hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle uses permitted by MS 84.926 not apply on DNR-Forestry administered lands in this area.

There are about 2,800 acres of scattered State Forest land along the Mississippi River south of Deer River in Itasca County. These lands are south of US Highway 2 and cannot be classified as *managed*. These lands are located in townships T143N-R25W, T144N-R26W, T144N-W25W, and T145N-R25W. The planning team recommends that these lands south of US Highway 2 be classified as *limited*.

**FOREST ROUTE INVENTORY**

In preparation for this road and trail designation process, the DNR Chippewa Team compiled available information on the existing roads, trails, and routes that show evidence of continuing human use on all State Forest lands in the planning area. Geographic information system (GIS) data on public highways was obtained from the MN Department of Transportation. GIS data on previously designated forest roads was collected from the DNR and US Forest Service. Available data on previously designated motorized and non-motorized recreational trails was collated.

In 2003 and 2004, DNR staff made an effort to inventory the location and condition of all existing but previously undocumented forest access routes on state- and county-administered forest lands that show evidence of ongoing human use. Field crews inventoried most of the access routes using ATVs equipped with global positioning system (GPS) units. The location of some routes that were not passable with ATVs, for example winter use timber harvest routes, were digitized from aerial photos. Field crews recorded locations where the access routes intersected with routes that were too narrow or unsafe for ATV access. They also recorded locations where the routes ended. Inventory crews collected data such as tread width, apparent use, level of use, and surface condition. All forest route data was entered into GIS databases and was used in recommending forest road and trail designations.
US Forest Service and DNR GIS staff compiled all the highway, forest road, trail, and access route data into a 'travel routes' database. 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. Highway authorities are continually adding, rerouting, and abandoning highways. Public land ownership patterns change as lands are acquired, sold, or exchanged. Natural resource management activities, fires, and timber sales create or obliterate forest access routes. Unused trails and routes re-vegetate, beavers flood routes, and what is a passable route in a dry year maybe impassable in wet years.

The forest route inventory showed 740 miles of routes on State Forest land and 326 miles of routes on County Forest land within the DNR’s Chippewa planning unit.

| Forest Access Routes on State and County Land in the DNR Chippewa Project Area |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| State Forest | Miles on State Forest Land | Miles on County Forest Land |
| Battleground | 6 | 2 |
| Big Fork | 103 | 29 |
| Blackduck | 102 | 30 |
| Bowstring | 233 | 19 |
| Buena Vista | 62 | 43 |
| Remer | 7 | 1 |
| Welsh Lake | 11 | 3 |
| Outside of State Forest | 216 | 199 |
| **Total** | **740** | **326** |

*Source: Chippewa GIS Travel Route Data 28JUN2006*

**ROUTE DESIGNATION POLICIES AND PROCESS**

The complex and intermingled public land ownership pattern within the Chippewa area requires a collaborative effort by county, state, and federal agencies to develop a motor vehicle management system that protects natural resources, serves public needs, and complies with existing laws and rules.

US Forest Service administered lands within the Chippewa National Forest are managed under policies contained in the forest plan. Recently adopted federal regulations require the development of Travel Management maps that will show which routes are open to use by various types of motor vehicles.

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 the 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 with 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)

Minnesota Rules Chapter 6100.1950 contains policies and regulations for public use of motor vehicles on State Forest land.

Beltrami, Cass, and Itasca counties have Land Departments that manage county forest lands in accordance with management plans and policies adopted by their respective County Boards. Most of the county forest lands are tax-forfeited lands and are managed in compliance with Minnesota Statutes Chapter 282.

**Interagency Recognition of Forest Road Designations**

The US Forest Service, the Department of Natural Resources, and each county Land Department has forest road designation and management policies. Given the complex land ownership pattern it is quite common for forest roads that are managed by one agency to cross lands administered by another agency. This allows one agency to be responsible for signing and maintenance of a road that serves lands administered by other agencies, and in some cases adjacent private land.

As part of the collaborative motor vehicle management effort for public forest lands in the Chippewa area the county, state, and federal forest management agencies have agreed to mutually recognize forest roads that have been formally designated by each agency. For example, the DNR will recognize a National Forest road that crosses State Forest lands and agrees that the US Forest Service policies will govern public use of the road.

In addition to formally designated forest roads there are non-designated routes that exist on public forest lands. The agencies have agreed that control, management, and public use of these non-designated routes will be governed by the policies of the underlying land owner.

**Development of Proposals**

The forest road and trail designations for State Forest lands proposed in this plan were developed by an interagency team using the Travel Route inventory data, local land manager’s knowledge of the routes, and public input gathered during the open house meetings in January 2006. About a dozen interagency working sessions were held during February and March 2006 to develop a consensus recommendation for presentation to each agency and the public. The challenge was to propose an understandable system that complies with existing laws and policies, adequately protects natural resources, and serves public demands.
The interagency work groups used geographic information system tools to map and document the proposals. Each of the routes on public forest lands was assigned a proposed designation (forest road, recreational trail, non-designated) and was coded as to which types of motor vehicles (highway licensed vehicles, All Terrain Vehicles, Off-highway Motorcycles, Off Road Vehicles) the public would be allowed to use on the route. The primary reason for each proposed designation was also recorded.

For previously designated forest roads and recreational trails, the presumption was that the current designation and uses would be maintained unless there was a compelling reason to propose changes.

**PROPOSED FOREST ROAD AND TRAIL DESIGNATIONS**

The proposed designation of inventoried routes on State Forest lands is presented below. The miles of routes proposed to receive various administrative designations (forest road, OHV trail, non-motorized trail, non-designated routes) are identified. There are 740 miles of inventoried routes on State Forest land and 326 miles on County Forest land within the DNR’s Chippewa planning area. The routes that are proposed for each designation are shown on the maps that are part of this plan. The following table summarizes proposed designations for routes located on state- and county-administered forest lands.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route Designation</th>
<th>State Forest Land (miles)</th>
<th>County Forest Land (miles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>System Forest Road</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Min. Maintenance Forest Road</td>
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<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Forest Road</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>29</td>
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<td>Mixed Use Analysis</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-designated Routes</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Proactive Closures</td>
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<td>In managed forests (Access)</td>
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<td>114</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATV Trail*</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Soo Line North (50 miles)</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to &lt; 1,000 pound</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHM Trail*</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORV Trail*</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-motorized Trails</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* It is anticipated that additional OHV Trails will be designated in a future collaborative planning effort involving the US Forest Service, DNR, and the counties.
**Forest Roads**

Forest roads are routes that are maintained by resource management agencies to provide access to public forest lands for resource management and public use. Forest roads range from unimproved double track with native soil surface to two-lane gravel roads with improved drainage. Forest roads are not considered ‘public highways’ and the resource agencies are not ‘road authorities.’ Each agency sets public use rules and determine the types of vehicles allowed on the forest roads it manages.

The DNR develops and maintains State Forest Roads to access State Forest lands. Various state statutes govern the development and use of State Forest Roads. Key concepts include:

1. “State forest road” means a road constructed, acquired, maintained, or administered by the commissioner for the purpose of carrying out forest resource management…” *(MN Statutes 89.001, Subd.14)*
2. “The commissioner shall provide a system of forest roads and trails which provides access to state forest land…” *(MN Statutes 89.002, Subd. 3)*
3. “…the commissioner is not a road authority under chapters 160 to 168, and chapters 160 to 168 do not apply to forest roads…” *(MN Statutes 89.71, Subd.7)*
4. “The commissioner may designate a state forest road as a minimum-maintenance forest road to be maintained at a level consistent with the intended use…” *(MN Statutes 89.71, Subd. 5)*

State Forest Roads are generally open to use by both highway-licensed vehicles and off-highway vehicles (ATVs, OHMs, and ORVs). However, forest roads may be temporarily closed, at any time, to some or all vehicular use due to public safety and/or natural resource protection considerations. The DNR divides State Forest Roads into two classes – System Roads and Minimum Maintenance Roads – based on their condition, intended use and planned maintenance level.

**System Roads** are the major roads in the forest that provide forest management access, recreational access, and links to state, county, or township public roads. System roads are used on a daily or weekly basis, and are maintained to allow travel by highway licensed vehicles.

**Minimum Maintenance Roads** are forest management access roads used on an intermittent basis. Recreational users may use them, but they are not promoted or maintained for recreational use. While open to public use, minimum maintenance roads will not be maintained to a level where low-clearance vehicles can routinely travel on them. They are signed with a “Minimum Maintenance Road” signs, and may be gated and closed during certain times of the year. Minimum maintenance roads are more likely to be subjected to travel restrictions than are higher standard system forest roads.

Forest roads maintained by County Land Departments are typically similar to State Forest Roads in terms of maintenance levels and public use guidelines.

The US Forest Service manages National Forest Roads. In some cases these National Forest Roads are located on state or county administered land. National Forest Roads are typically signed with brown and white road number signs. The Forest Service assigns National Forest
Roads an Operational Management Level between 1 and 5. Operational Management Level 1 roads are the least developed and level 5 roads are the most improved forest roads. The types of vehicles allowed varies by Operational Management Level. The higher level roads are typically open to highway licensed vehicles but closed to ATVs.

**System Forest Roads**
The proposal is to designate 23 miles of System State Forest Roads within the planning area. These roads will be managed by the DNR and will typically be open to HLVs and OHVs. These roads are located on various ownerships - 12 miles are on DNR-administered lands, 3 miles are on county-administered land, and the remainder is on other ownerships.

**Minimum Maintenance Forest Roads**
The proposal is to designate 109 miles of Minimum Maintenance State Forest Roads within the planning area. These roads will be managed by the DNR and will typically be open to HLVs and OHVs but they may not be maintained to a level where low-clearance vehicles can routinely travel on them. These state-administered minimum maintenance forest roads are located on various ownerships – 83 miles are on DNR-administered land, 7 are miles on county-administered land, and the remainder is on other ownerships.

The proposal is to designate 30 miles as county-administered Minimum Maintenance Forest Roads. These will be managed by the County Land Department and will typically be open to HLVs and OHVs but they may not be maintained to a level where low-clearance vehicles can routinely travel on them. Twenty-seven miles of these county minimum maintenance forest roads are located on county-administered lands, about 1 mile is on DNR-administered land, and the remainder is on other ownerships.

**National Forest Roads**
The travel route inventory included over 3,000 miles of roads and trails administered by the US Forest Service within the planning area. Some of these routes are located on state- and county-administered lands.

As part of the collaborative motor vehicle management effort for public forest lands in the Chippewa area the county, state, and federal forest management agencies have agreed to mutually recognize forest roads that have been formally designated by each agency. For example, the DNR will recognize a National Forest Road that crosses State Forest lands and agrees that the US Forest Service policies will govern public use of the road.

As part of its ongoing travel management planning effort the US Forest Service will determine which forest roads are open for use by various types of motor vehicles. Currently some National Forest Roads are open to both HLVs and OHVs. Roads open to both highway and off-highway vehicles are typically lower standard, narrow routes (Operational Management Level 2). Other National Forest Roads are open to HLVs but are closed to ATVs, which cannot be licensed for highway use. Roads closed to ATVs are typically higher standard forest roads (Operational Management Levels 3 to 5). The US Forest Service is conducting a “mixed use analysis” on some routes that have been classified as closed to ATVs in the past to see if it is feasible to allow both HLVs and ATVs to use these routes. The following sections list the number of miles of
National Forest Road on state- and county-administered land that fall under each of the motor vehicle use combinations.

**Open to OHVs and HLVs**
The proposed designations include 41 miles of National Forest Road on State Forest land that would be open to both OHVs and HLVs. The US Forest Service will manage these roads.

The proposed designations include 29 miles of National Forest Road on county-administered forest lands that would be open to both OHVs and HLVs. The US Forest Service will manage these roads.

**Mixed Use Analysis**
The proposed designations include 17 miles of National Forest Road on State Forest land that will have a “mixed use analysis” completed. These roads will remain open to HLVs and may be opened to ATVs in the future if the analysis finds that it is feasible to allow both HLVs and ATVs to operate on the road.

The proposed designations include 10 miles of National Forest Road on county-administered forest lands that will have a “mixed use analysis” completed. These roads will remain open to HLVs and may be opened to ATVs in the future if the analysis finds that it is feasible to allow both HLVs and ATVs to operate on the road.

**Open to HLVs, Closed to ATVs**
The proposed designations include 22 miles of National Forest Road on State Forest land that will be remain open to HLVs and closed to ATVs. These are mostly higher standard National Forest Roads (OML 3 to 5) that are not proposed for mixed use analysis.

The proposed designations include 13 miles of National Forest Road on county-administered forest lands that will remain open to HLVs and closed to ATVs. These are mostly higher standard National Forest Roads (OML 3 to 5) that are not proposed for mixed use analysis.

**OHV Trails**
This Forest Road and Trail Designation Plan for State Forest lands in the Chippewa area is different from the plans completed for State Forest lands in other areas to date. It does not contain proposals for newly designated ATV, OHM, or ORV recreational trails. This does not indicate that there are no opportunities for additional recreational OHV trails in the area. The Forest Plan for the Chippewa National Forest allows for designation of up to 90 miles of OHV trail on National Forest land. Given the prevalence of National Forest land in the area (about 2 acres of National Forest land for each acre of State Forest land) and the desire of county, state, and federal agencies to collaboratively manage motor vehicle use on public forest lands in the area, designation and development of additional OHV recreational trails will be a joint project in the future. This plan does identify some potential corridors and areas for future recreational OHV trails. Deferring the designation of new OHV recreational trails in the Chippewa area will make it easier to meet the state mandate to complete the motor vehicle use classification and designation of existing routes on State Forest lands by December 31, 2008.
ATV Trails
The only designated recreational ATV trail in the Chippewa area is the Soo Line North Trail, which is located mostly on a former railroad grade. The portion of the Soo Line North Trail in the Chippewa area covers 50 miles from Cass Lake to the Chippewa National Forest boundary southeast of Remer. The Soo Line North Trail continues south through Aitkin and Carlton counties to the city of Moose Lake. Within the Chippewa area the designated uses of the Soo Line North Trail are snowmobiles in the winter and ATVs in the non-snowmobile seasons. The portion of the trail in the Chippewa is managed as a grant-in-aid trail by Cass County. About 5 miles of the Soo Line North Trail are located on county forest land and 3 miles on State Forest land.

Some routes in the Chippewa area can sustain some use by lighter motor vehicles but are not suitable for regular use by heavier vehicles. These routes typically have a gate and/or sign at the entry point indicating that vehicles weighing less than 1,000 pounds are allowed on the route. About 10 miles of these ‘open to less than 1,000 pound’ routes are on DNR-administered land and 3 miles are on county-administered land.

See Forest Roads and Access Routes for description of ATV riding opportunities in addition to designated ATV trails. See the Potential Corridors and Areas for Recreational OHV Trails map.

OHM Trails
There are no existing designated OHM trails in the Chippewa area. OHMs can use the ‘less than 1,000 pound routes’ described above in the ATV trails section. See Forest Roads and Access Routes for description of OHM riding opportunities. See the Potential Corridors and Areas for Recreational OHV Trails map.

ORV Trails
There are no existing designated ORV trails in the Chippewa area. See Forest Roads and Access Routes for description of ORV riding opportunities. See the Potential Corridors and Areas for Recreational OHV Trails map.

Non-Motorized Trails
There are more than 375 miles of designated non-motorized recreational trails in the Chippewa area. The proposed motor vehicle road and trail designations in this plan recognize existing non-motorized trail designations and attempt to reduce conflict between motorized and non-motorized recreational users of the forest. The road and trail designations also take into account the US Forest Service’s Semi-primitive Non-motorized areas and the DNR’s proposed Non-motorized Access Areas. Many of the existing non-motorized trails exist on areas of intermixed federal, state, and county forest land. The proposed trail designations in this plan will result in minor additions to the mileage of designated non-motorized trails on State Forest lands.

North Country Trail: The North Country Trail (NCT) is a component of the national historic and scenic trails system. About 70 miles of the NCT are located in the southern part of the Chippewa National Forest. The NCT is signed and managed as a hiking trail. While most of the
trail in the Chippewa area is on national forest land, short sections cross state- and county-administered forest land.

**Paul Bunyan and Heartland State Trails:** Portions of the Paul Bunyan and Heartland State Trails are located in the eastern part of the Chippewa area. The primary uses of these trails are bicycling, hiking, and in-line skating in the summer and snowmobiling in the winter. About 5 miles of these State Trails cross DNR-administered forest lands and 1 mile crosses county-administered lands.

**Chippewa National Forest Bike Routes:** The Chippewa National Forest has designated about 20 miles of bicycle routes, including the 14-mile paved Mi-Gi-Zi bike trail along Pike Bay. About 1 mile of these routes are located on DNR-administered forest lands.

**Hiking, Hunter Walking, Interpretive, X-C Ski Trails:** About 245 miles of trail are designated and maintained for a variety of non-motorized recreational uses on public forest lands in the Chippewa area. Most of these trails have multiple uses depending on the season – hiking in the spring or summer, hunter walking in the fall, snowshoe or ski in the winter. Many of these trails exist on areas of intermixed federal, state, and county forest land. About 49 miles are located on DNR-administered lands and 13 miles are on county-administered lands.

**Snowmobile Trails**

This Forest Road and Trail Designation Plan does not change the existing snowmobile trail system in the Chippewa area. Existing snowmobile routes were considered in developing the road and trail designations. Some snowmobile trails exist on forest roads or trails that are designated for use by HLVs or OHVs at certain times of the year.

**Non-designated Routes**

Many of the existing routes on State Forest land will not be designated as either Forest Roads or recreational trails. These routes will not be actively managed. The uses allowed on non-designated routes depend on the motor vehicle use classification of the land.

**Proactive Closures**

Some non-designated routes are not suitable for any public motor vehicle use and have been damaged by past use. Routes that are proactively closed will have signs, gates, or barricades to clearly indicate that motor vehicle use is no longer allowed. Routes that are proactively closed are not available for motor vehicle use under the hunting and trapping exceptions. The absence of a sign, gate, or barricade does not mean that a route is available or suitable for motor vehicle use. On State Forest lands classified as **closed or limited** unsigned routes are generally closed to motor vehicle use. On **managed** State Forest lands unsigned routes are available for motor vehicle use so long as operation of the vehicle does not cause rutting, erosion, or damage to trees or crops. The proposed designations include 53 miles of proactive closures on State Forest land and 1 mile on county-administered forest lands.
Non-designated (closed forests)

Non-designated routes on *closed* forest lands are available for non-motorized uses such as hiking but are not signed or managed. The only motorized uses permitted in *closed* forests are highway licensed vehicles (HLVs) on signed Forest Roads and snowmobiles on signed snowmobile trails. There are no ATV riding opportunities on *closed* forest lands and the hunting and trapping exceptions do not apply.

The proposed designations leave 11 miles of routes non-designated on DNR-administered lands and 3 miles of routes non-designated on county-administered lands that are classified as *closed* to motor vehicle use. The existing Triville Snowmobile Trail through the Battleground State Forest will be designated and remain open to snowmobile use.

Non-designated (limited forests)

Non-designated routes on *limited* forest lands are available for non-motorized uses but are not signed or managed for any public recreational use. Non-designated routes on *limited* forest lands are generally closed to motor vehicle use. However, these routes can be used by motor vehicles for certain big game hunting and trapping related activities at certain times of the year as allowed by MN Statutes 84.926. When using motor vehicles on these routes under the hunting and trapping exceptions it is illegal to operate the vehicle in a manner that causes rutting, erosion, or damage to trees or crops.

The proposed designations leave 201 miles of routes non-designated on DNR-administered lands and 98 miles of routes non-designated on county-administered lands that are classified as *limited* for motor vehicle use.

Access Routes (managed forests)

Non-designated routes on *managed* forest lands are called Access Routes because they have different motor vehicle use conditions than non-designated routes on *closed* or *limited* forest lands. On forest lands classified as *managed*, the non-designated and unsigned Access Routes are available for both non-motorized and motorized uses. These routes provide general public recreational access to forest lands. In addition, these routes are available for motor vehicle use while hunting or trapping as allowed by MN Statutes 84.926. While Access Routes are available for motor vehicle use in an “as is” condition there will be times when it is inappropriate to use motor vehicles on these routes. It is up to the vehicle operator to determine if conditions will allow them to use the Access Route without causing damage. When using motor vehicles on these Access Routes it is illegal to operate the vehicle in a manner that causes rutting, erosion, or damage to trees or crops. Some unsigned routes on *managed* forest lands may be former winter logging routes or snowmobile routes that lead to wetlands or surface waters; while it may be appropriate to use motor vehicles on these routes under frozen conditions it is likely that motor vehicle use under non-frozen conditions will result in illegal rutting. Access Routes that are damaged by motor vehicle use are subject to proactive closure.

The proposed designations leave 236 miles of routes non-designated on DNR-administered lands and 114 miles of routes non-designated on county-administered lands that are classified as *managed*. 
MAPS
The proposed forest road and trail designations in the Chippewa area are depicted on the following maps, which are incorporated in this plan by reference:
1. Motor Vehicle Use Classification and Route Designation
2. All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) and Off Highway Motorcycle (OHM) Routes
3. Highway Licensed Vehicle (HLV) and Off Road Vehicle (ORV) Routes
4. Potential Corridors and Areas for Recreational Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trails

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Adoption of the Classification and Road / Trail Designation Plan
The proposed classification of State Forest lands for motor vehicle use and the proposed road and trail designations in this draft plan are subject to public review and comment. A public notice of the proposed classification and designations will be published in the State Register and the legal newspapers for Beltrami, Cass, and Itasca counties. A statewide DNR news release will also announce the availability of the plan for public review. A public open house meeting will be held not sooner than 60 days following the public notice.

The DNR will evaluate public input received at the public open house and in written comments. The classification and designation decisions may be modified in response to comments. Final plans and maps will be published. The Commissioner of Natural Resources will then issue Commissioner’s Orders to change the motor vehicle use classification and to designate forest roads and trails on DNR-administered lands.

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

The DNR is committed to substantially completing the development and signing of roads and trails as proposed in the final plan prior to the effective date in the classification order.

Expected Date of Change in Motor Vehicle Use Classification
The DNR will try to substantially complete the development and signing of roads and trails within one year after publication of the Commissioner’s Orders. If the orders are published in late 2006 as anticipated, the effective date for the classification changes would be December 31, 2007.

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 roads and trails for maintenance and sustainability needs. 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 periods, after extreme storm events) or while needed repairs are made. Permanent changes to the designated road and trail system (change in allowed uses, addition or deletion of routes) will be subject to public review and comment.
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.

Minneapolis 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

Non-motorized Access Area Boundary Descriptions

Drumbeater Lake Non-motorized Access Area near Mud-Goose WMA: From the west boundary of the Mud-Goose WMA and USFS Road 2266; then south along the Mud-Goose WMA boundary to the Leech Lake River; then west along the Leech Lake River to the Soo Line Grade; then north along the Soo line Grade to County Highway 8; then north on County Highway 8 to the Pipeline snowmobile trail; then east along the Pipeline snowmobile trail to USFS Road 2130; then south on USFS Road 2130 to USFS Road 2339; then south on USFS Road 2339 to USFS Road 2266 and east on USFS Road 2266 to the beginning.

Morph Meadows NE Non-motorized Access Area near Morph Meadows WMA: From the east boundary the Morph Meadows WMA and USFS Road 2171; then north along the Morph Meadows WMA boundary to USFS Road 2207; then north on USFS Road 2207 to DNR Trail; then east on DNR Trail to Castle Creek; then south along Castle Creek to DNR Trail; then north on DNR Trail to old County Highway 33; then north on old County Highway 33 to Crane Creek; then south along Crane Creek to the Third River; then south along the Third River to the Third River flowage; then west along the Third River flowage to Island Lake Creek; then west along Island Lake Creek to USFS Road 2171 and north on USFS Road 2171 to the beginning.

Dishpan-Fiske Lake Non-motorized Access Area including Dishpan WMA: From the east boundary of Dishpan WMA and USFS Road 2240; then south on USFS Road 2240 to County Highway 26; then south on County Highway 26 to County Highway 29; then west on County Highway 29 to USFS Road 2229; then north on USFS Road 2229 to Township Road; then north on Township Road to County Highway 31; then east on County Highway 31 to USFS 2240 and then south on USFS 2240 to the beginning.

Willow River Non-motorized Access Area: The eastern portion of the Remer State Forest near the Cass/Itasca county line consisting of Sections 12, 13, 14, 23, 24, 25, and that portion of Section 36 north of the South Fork of the Willow River in T142N-R25W (East Cass Unorganized).