

**Forest Classification**  
and  
**Forest Road and Trail Designations**  
for  
**State Forest Lands in and Near the**  
**Chippewa National Forest**

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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.1. Purpose**

*Minnesota Laws 2003*, Chapter 128, Article 1, Section 167 (as amended in 2005 and 2007) 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. An interagency group involving county, state, and federal forest land managers developed the recommended classifications and designations. This plan documents recommendations for State Forest lands managed by the Department of Natural Resources. County forest lands are managed by the respective counties.

### **1.2. 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 plan. 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 of state forest land will be classified and have roads and trails designated by Commissioners Order.

State Forest	Gross Acreage	State	County	Federal	Leech Lake Band
Battleground	18,000	9,400	700	1,100	1,200
Big Fork	127,900	44,800	11,800	39,600	200
Blackduck	125,000	39,700	9,400	48,100	0
Bowstring	526,600	116,200	6,000	236,600	17,400
Buena Vista	122,300	18,600	17,100	26,600	900
Remer	12,900	2,400	600	9,300	0
Welsh Lake	19,800	6,100	1,100	900	1,300
	952,500	237,200	46,700	362,200	21,000

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.

### 1.3. 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 an ‘Area with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use’ in the Dishpan – Fiske Lake area
- [Blackduck State Forest](#) – *managed* with an ‘Area with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use’ NE of Morph Meadows WMA
- [Bowstring State Forest](#) – *limited* with an ‘Area with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use’ 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 an ‘Area with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use’ 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 *limited*.

### 1.4. Forest Route Inventory

The forest route inventory showed about 739 miles of routes on State Forest land within the DNR's Chippewa planning unit.

## 1.5. Proposed Road and Trail Designations

The forest road and trail designations for State Forest lands in this plan were developed by an interagency team using the forest route inventory data, local land manager's knowledge of the routes, and public input gathered during the open house meetings in January 2006 and the public review process in October 2006. The challenge was to propose an understandable system that complies with existing laws and policies, adequately protects natural resources, and serves public demands.

The table below summarizes the designation of routes on state forest lands.

Forest Road and Trail Designation Mileage Summary for State Forest Land		
Route Designation	Miles on State Forest Lands	
<a href="#">System Forest Road</a> <sup>1</sup>	12.4	
<a href="#">Min. Maintenance Forest Road</a> <sup>2</sup>	72.6	
<a href="#">National Forest Road</a> <sup>3</sup>	133.5	
<a href="#">OHV Trails</a> <sup>4</sup>	12.2	
ATV/OHM Trail <sup>5</sup>	8.8	
Soo Line North Trail <sup>6</sup>	3.4	
ORV Trail	0	
<a href="#">Non-motorized Trails</a>	42.3	
Hunter Walking Trails	38.9	
Other Non-motorized Trails	3.4	
<a href="#">Non-designated Routes</a>	466.1	
Proactive Closures	27.4	
In <i>closed</i> forests	16.6	
In <i>limited</i> forests	192.8	
In <i>managed</i> forests (Access Routes)	229.3	
<b>All Routes</b>	<b>739.1</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Total System State Forest Road designation in the area is 23.8 miles. In addition to the mileage on state forest land there are 3.9 miles on county forest land, 3.8 miles on national forest land, and 3.7 miles on other ownerships.

<sup>2</sup> Total Minimum Maintenance State Forest Road designation in the area is 91.1 miles. In addition to the mileage on state forest land there are 11.8 miles on national forest land, 3.7 miles on county forest land, and 3.0 miles on other ownerships.

<sup>3</sup> Forest roads managed by the US Forest Service on state forest land. Motor vehicle use controlled by US Forest Service.

<sup>4</sup> It is anticipated that additional OHV trails will be designated in a future collaborative planning effort involving the US Forest Service, MN DNR, and the counties.

<sup>5</sup> Trails on state forest land classified as *limited* that are signed and managed for ATV and OHM use. Trails are closed to use by HLVs and ORVs.

<sup>6</sup> There are 50 miles of the Soo Line North Trail within the Chippewa. This trail is a grant-in-aid trail on a former railroad bed managed by Cass County. It is open to snowmobiles and ATVs.

## **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 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 in 2005 and 2007) 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.

### **2.1. Process**

In November 2005, an interdisciplinary team with members from the DNR divisions of Ecological Resources, 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.

### **3. 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.

#### **3.1. Location, Acreage, and Ownership**

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

##### **3.1.1. 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.

##### **3.1.2. 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 plan.

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.

### 3.1.3. County Lands

The Land Departments of Beltrami, Cass, and Itasca counties manage about 148,000 acres of land within the Chippewa planning unit.

### 3.1.4. 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.

## 4. 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. A summary of the principle [statutes, laws, and rules](#) related to public motor vehicle use on State Forest lands is attached.

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. Class 1 ATVs may be operated on non-designated routes and off trail under the hunting and trapping exceptions. Class 2 ATVs, 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. Class 1 ATVs may be operated on non-designated routes and off trail under the hunting and trapping exceptions. Class 2 ATVs, 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). 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.

#### **4.1. 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 western Itasca counties ([Location Map](#)). The planning unit covers slightly over 2 million acres, including water-covered areas.

##### **4.1.1. 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.

State Forest	Gross Acreage	State	County	Federal	Leech Lake
Battleground	18,000	9,400	700	1,100	1,200
Big Fork	127,900	44,800	11,800	39,600	200
Blackduck	125,000	39,700	9,400	48,100	0
Bowstring	526,600	116,200	6,000	236,600	17,400
Buena Vista	122,300	18,600	17,100	26,600	900
Remer	12,900	2,400	600	9,300	0
Welsh Lake	19,800	6,100	1,100	900	1,300
	952,500	237,200	46,700	362,200	21,000

## **4.2. 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.

## **4.3. 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.

#### **4.4. State Forest 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 motor vehicle use classification for each State Forest are presented below. The Commissioner of Natural Resources will classify State Forest lands within the planning area as follows:

##### **4.4.1. 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 crosses some state land within the forest. The existing allowed uses of the Soo Line North Trail and the Triville snowmobile trail will continue and will not be affected by the *closed* motor vehicle use classification of the Battleground State Forest.

##### **4.4.2. 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 state forest lands in this portion of the Big Fork State Forest will be designated as an 'Area with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use' and the hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle uses permitted by MS 84.926 will not apply on DNR-Forestry administered lands in 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.](#)

#### **4.4.3. 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 state forest lands in this portion of the Blackduck State Forest will be designated as an ‘Area with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use’ and the hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle uses permitted by MS 84.926 will not apply on DNR-Forestry administered lands in the [Morph Meadows NE](#) area. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **4.4.4. 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 state forest lands in this portion of the Bowstring State Forest will be designated as an ‘Area with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use’ and the hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle uses permitted by MS 84.926 will not apply. See the map and the description of the boundaries of the [Drumbeater Lake](#) area. \_\_\_\_\_

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.

#### **4.4.5. 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.

#### **4.4.6. 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 eastern portion of the Remer State Forest north of the South Fork of the Willow River will be designated as an ‘Area with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use’ Non-motorized Access Area and the hunting- and trapping-related motor vehicle uses permitted by MS 84.926 will not be allowed. See the [map and the description](#) of the boundaries of the [Willow River](#) 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.

#### **4.4.7. 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.

#### **4.4.8. 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.

#### **4.4.9. 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.

#### **4.4.10. Scattered State Forest Lands in Western Itasca County – *Managed***

The DNR’s Chippewa planning area includes lands outside of the boundaries of named State Forests in the western portion 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 remaining acres 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 will 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. These DNR-Forestry administered lands south of US Highway 2 will be classified as *limited*.

## **5. 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 about 739 miles of routes on State Forest land within the DNR’s Chippewa planning unit.

<b>Inventoried Routes on State Forest Land in the DNR Chippewa Project Area</b>	
<b>State Forest</b>	<b>Miles on State Forest Land</b>
Battleground	5.9
Big Fork	102.5
Blackduck	101.1
Bowstring	233.5
Buena Vista	63.4
Remer	6.9
Welsh Lake	11.2
Outside of State Forest	214.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>739.1</b>

## **6. 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.

### **6.1. *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.

### **6.2. *Development of Proposals***

The forest road and trail designations for State Forest lands 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 designations. 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 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.

## 7. FOREST ROAD AND TRAIL DESIGNATIONS

The table below lists the miles of routes on State Forest lands that will receive various administrative designations (forest road, OHV trail, non-motorized trail, non-designated routes). There are 739 miles of inventoried routes on State Forest lands within the DNR's Chippewa planning area. The routes that are given each designation are shown on the maps that are part of this plan.

Forest Road and Trail Designation Mileage Summary for State Forest Land		
Route Designation	Miles on State Forest Lands	
<a href="#">System Forest Road</a> <sup>1</sup>		12.4
<a href="#">Min. Maintenance Forest Road</a> <sup>2</sup>		72.6
<a href="#">National Forest Road</a> <sup>3</sup>		133.5
<a href="#">OHV Trails</a> <sup>4</sup>		12.2
ATV/OHM Trail <sup>5</sup>	8.8	
Soo Line North Trail <sup>6</sup>	3.4	
ORV Trail	0	
<a href="#">Non-motorized Trails</a>		42.3
Hunter Walking Trails	38.9	
Other Non-motorized Trails	3.4	
<a href="#">Non-designated Routes</a>		466.1
Proactive Closures	27.4	
In <i>closed</i> forests	16.6	
In <i>limited</i> forests	192.8	
In <i>managed</i> forests (Access Routes)	229.3	
<b>All Routes</b>		<b>739.1</b>

<sup>1</sup> Total System State Forest Road designation in the area is 23.8 miles. In addition to the mileage on state forest land there are 3.9 miles on county forest land, 3.8 miles on national forest land, and 3.7 miles on other ownerships.

<sup>2</sup> Total Minimum Maintenance State Forest Road designation in the area is 91.1 miles. In addition to the mileage on state forest land there are 11.8 miles on national forest land, 3.7 miles on county forest land, and 3.0 miles on other ownerships.

<sup>3</sup> Forest roads managed by the US Forest Service on state forest land. Motor vehicle use controlled by US Forest Service.

<sup>4</sup> It is anticipated that additional OHV trails will be designated in a future collaborative planning effort involving the US Forest Service, MN DNR, and the counties.

<sup>5</sup> Trails on state forest land classified as *limited* that are signed and managed for ATV and OHM use. Trails are closed to use by HLVs and ORVs.

<sup>6</sup> There are 50 miles of the Soo Line North Trail within the Chippewa. This trail is a grant-in-aid trail on a former railroad bed managed by Cass County. It is open to snowmobiles and ATVs.

## 7.1. 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 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 highways. 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 type of vehicles allowed varies by Operational Management Level. The higher level roads are typically open to highway licensed vehicles but closed to ATVs. The Chippewa National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map shows the allowed vehicle types and seasons of use on National Forest Roads.

### **7.1.1. System Forest Roads**

There will be a total of 23.8 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 – 12.4 miles are on DNR-administered lands, 3.9 miles are on county-administered land, and the remainder is on other ownerships.

### **7.1.2. Minimum Maintenance Forest Roads**

There will be 91.1 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 – 72.6 miles are on DNR-administered land, 3.7 are miles on county-administered land, and the remainder is on other ownerships.

### **7.1.3. 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. There are 133.5 miles of inventoried National Forest Roads located on State Forest 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 has determined which forest roads will open for use by various types of motor vehicles. 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. 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. The US Forest Service conducted a “mixed use analysis” on some routes that had 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 Motor Vehicle Use Map for the Chippewa National Forest shows the types of vehicles and seasons of use for National Forest Roads (see [http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/chippewa/recreation/atv\\_trails/index.php](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/chippewa/recreation/atv_trails/index.php) ).

## **7.2. 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 designate significant mileages of 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.

### **7.2.1. ATV Trails**

The only existing 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 3.4 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. There will be 8.8 miles of these trails signed and managed as ATV/OHM trails on DNR-administered forest lands.

See [Forest Roads](#) and [Access Routes](#) for description of ATV riding opportunities in addition to designated ATV trails.

### **7.2.2. 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.

### **7.2.3. 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.

### **7.3. Non-Motorized Trails**

There are more than 375 miles of designated non-motorized recreational trails in the Chippewa area. The 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 [Areas with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use](#). Many of the existing non-motorized trails exist on areas of intermixed federal, state, and county forest land. The 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-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.

**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 bicycle trails 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. There are 38.9 miles of these trails located on DNR-administered forest lands.

### **7.4. 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.

### **7.5. Non-designated Routes**

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



### **7.5.1. 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. There will be 27.4 miles of proactive closures on State Forest land.

### **7.5.2. 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. There are no ATV riding opportunities on *closed* forest lands and the hunting and trapping exceptions do not apply.

There are 16.6 miles of non-designated routes on DNR-administered lands that are classified as *closed* to motor vehicle use. The existing Triville Snowmobile Trail through the Battleground State Forest will remain open to snowmobile use.

### **7.5.3. 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.

There are 192.8 miles of non-designated routes on state forest lands that are classified as *limited* with respect to motor vehicle use.

### **7.5.4. 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 trails 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.

There are 229.3 miles of non-designated routes on state forest lands that are classified as *managed* with respect to motor vehicle use.

## **8. MAPS**

The route designations in the Chippewa area are depicted on *Forest Road and Trail Designation Maps*, which are incorporated in this plan by reference.

## **9. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

### **9.1. Adoption of the Classification and Road / Trail Designation Plan**

The Commissioner of Natural Resources will issue Commissioner's Orders to change the motor vehicle use classification and to designate forest roads and trails on DNR-administered lands in accordance with this plan. The Commissioner's Orders will be published in the *State Register* and will include an effective date for the classifications and designations.

### **9.2. 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.

### **9.3. 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. The anticipated effective date for the classification changes will be December 31, 2008.

### **9.4. 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 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 route 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.