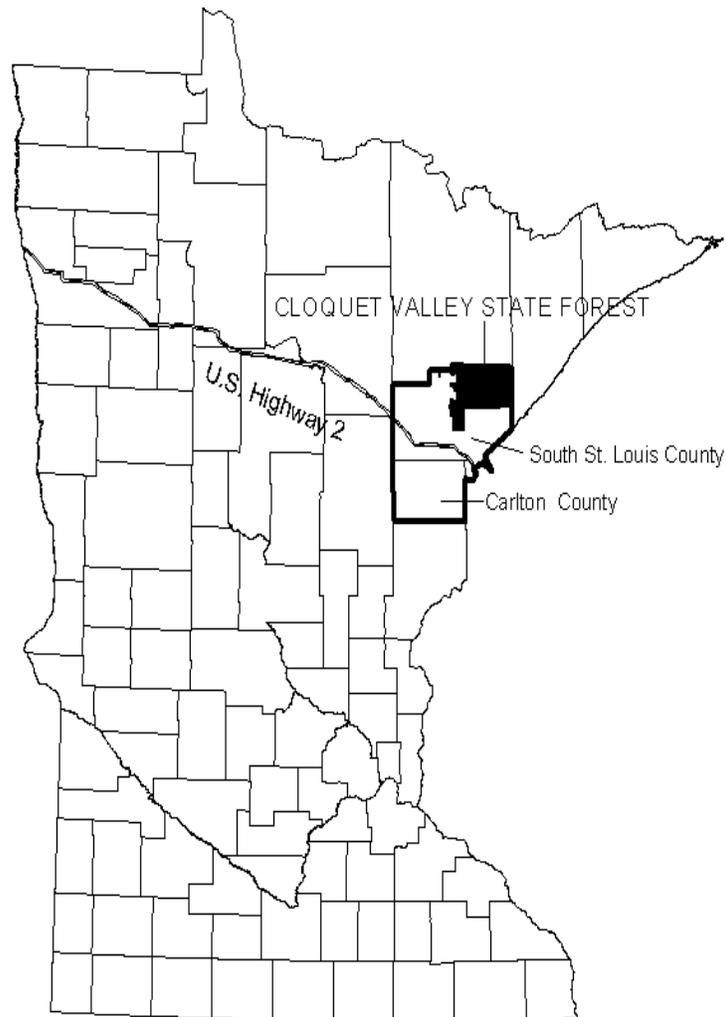


Forest Classification & Road / Trail Designation Plan for the Cloquet Valley State Forest & DNR Forestry-Administered Lands in Southern St. Louis & Carlton Counties

Public Review Draft
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Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

Minnesota Laws 2003, Chap. 128, Article 1, Sect. 167 (as amended) requires the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to review the classification of all state forests, and other state forest lands under the authority of the Commissioner by December 31, 2008. The DNR is to evaluate the current 'managed' forest classification, according to the process set forth in *MN Rules Chap. 6100.1950*, and retain or modify this classification as appropriate.

This plan also identifies those forest roads and trails that the DNR proposes to officially (un)designate for various motorized and non-motorized purposes within the planning area. Consistent with legislative policy direction, the future use of off-highway vehicles and motor vehicles (e.g., ATVs, OHMs, ORVs, HLVs) in this area will henceforth be in accordance with the direction outlined in the final version of this plan, as adopted by the Commissioner.

Lands Covered by this Plan

Located in SE St. Louis County, the Cloquet Valley State Forest is located about 20 miles north of Duluth and 25 miles southeast of Virginia., Minnesota. The forest is accessible via State Hwy 53 on the west, or via County Roads 4, 15 or 44 from the south. The forest is bounded on the east by the Lake County line. Scattered DNR forestry-administered lands outside the statutory forest boundaries, but located within Southern St. Louis and (all of) Carlton Counties, are also addressed in this plan. Forestry-administered lands in Northern St. Louis County will be addressed in a subsequent planning effort.

Land Ownership. This forest classification and road / trail designation plan covers all of the DNR forestry-administered lands within the statutory boundaries of the Cloquet Valley State Forest. Statutory state forest boundary encompasses 327,098 acres; 48,384 acres of which (or 15%) are DNR forestry administered lands. See Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of State Forest Land Ownership: Southern St. Louis & Carlton County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Jan. 2007. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

State Forest Lands	Statutory Acres	DNR-Admin Acres	Inventoried Route Miles
Cloquet Valley State Forest	327,098	48,384	1,017.4
Outside State Forest – So. St. Louis Co.	NA	77,105	116.3
Outside State Forest – Carlton Co.	NA	18,915	28.5
Totals	327,098	144,404	1,162.2

Scattered Lands. Division of Forestry-administered scattered tracts of land outside the statutory boundaries of the Cloquet Valley State Forest total 77,105 acres in Southern St. Louis County and 18,915 acres in Carlton County. These parcels vary in size and are bounded by county and private land. These lands are also included in this plan.

Under state law, County forest lands within the Cloquet Valley State Forest will be managed similarly to state forest lands (i.e., 'managed' classification; routes 'open' unless posted 'closed', with no off-trail travel) unless or until the county adopts a formal resolution or ordinance that specifies a different management approach for these lands.

Proposed Motor Vehicle Use Classification

All state forest lands within the Cloquet Valley State Forest, and scattered state lands outside the forest, are currently classified as ‘managed’. State lands within the BWCAW are ‘closed’ to motor vehicle use, and will remain so under this proposal.

This proposal recommends retaining the ‘managed’ classification for all state forest lands located within the statutory boundaries of the CVSF, and for those scattered lands outside the forest that lie north of U.S. Hwy 2 in St. Louis County. Scattered state lands south of U.S Hwy 2 in So. St. Louis and Carlton Counties would be reclassified as ‘limited’. See acreage totals in Table 1

Table 2. Proposed State Forest Land Classification: So. St. Louis & Carlton County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Jan. 2007. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Proposed Forest Classification	Inside State Forest (acres)	Outside SF So. St. Louis Co. (acres)	Outside SF Carlton Cty (acres)	Totals (acres)
Managed	48,384	72,666	0	121,050
Limited	0	4,439	18,915	23,354
Totals	48,384	77,105	18,915	144,404

This judgment is based upon the Team’s analysis of the eight criteria contained in *MR 6100.1950, Subp. 1-4* which guide the classification of forest lands for motor vehicle use.

Proposed Limitations on Off-Trail and Non-Designated Trail Use

The Cloquet Valley Planning Team recommends that the Commissioner invoke authority granted pursuant to *MN Stat. Chap. 84.926, Subd. 5*, in order to limit vehicular use within five areas totaling 16,416 acres (gross) identified in Appendix C. By so doing, state forest lands within the boundaries of these areas would not be subject to the exceptions provided for in *MN Stat. Chap. 84.926 Subd. 2 & 4*, which would otherwise allow for ATV and HLV use of non-designated routes for certain hunting and trapping purposes by licensed persons during open seasons.

All trail access and entry points, and the area boundaries themselves, will be clearly mapped and posted to inform forest users of these limitations. Designated State Forest Roads or trails within these areas would remain open to vehicle use, subject to the general prohibition on off-trail OHV travel, and pursuant to any temporary road closures or seasonal road-use restrictions. However, no OHV or HLV use of unsigned or undesignated routes in the areas would be permitted at any time.

This prohibition would apply only to state forest lands within the specified areas, and only to the use of ATVs and HLVs during legal hunting and trapping seasons. It does not modify the ‘managed’ forest classification proposed for the larger Cloquet Valley State Forest. Vehicular use of State Forest Roads and grant-in-aid snowmobile trails (by snowmobiles), would be unaffected. However, any future road or trail development proposals through these areas would be evaluated very carefully through the department’s interdisciplinary project review process, recognizing that vehicular use may be inconsistent with the management objectives that prompted these designations.

Proposed Forest Road & Trail Designations

The planning team evaluated all inventoried forest access routes and recommended that they be designated as a road or trail, be closed to future use, or that they remain ‘non-designated’. For existing designated roads and trails, the presumption was that the current designation and uses would be maintained, unless there was a compelling reason to propose changes. Under the ‘managed’ classification, all routes not designated as forest roads or

recreational trails will remain open to vehicular use, subject to state land prohibitions on rutting, erosion and damage to living vegetation.

State Forest Road Designations

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

System Forest Roads (SFRs) 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 graveled and maintained to allow travel by highway-licensed vehicles. System roads are typically open to all motor vehicles, including OHVs, but may be closed seasonally or temporarily to address specific road or fire conditions. State Forest Roads are, by definition, not regular public roads. They are principally intended to serve state forest management and protection needs, and they do not provide legal access to private property.

The Planning Team recommended the designation of 19.5 miles of System Forest Roads inside the CVSF, and 4.9 miles of SFR on scattered lands outside of State Forest boundaries.

Minimum Maintenance Roads (MMRs) 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. MMRs will be graded and graveled as needed for forest management purposes, but may not always be usable by low-clearance vehicles. MMRs are signed and may be gated and/or closed during certain times of the year.

The Planning Team proposes designation of 48.7 miles of MMRs inside the CVSF, and 8.8 miles on scattered state lands outside the forest.

Recreational Trail Designations

Non-motorized. The Planning Team has proposed the designation of 8.6 miles of hunter walking trails inside the CVSF, and another 9.2 miles of trail on scattered state lands outside the forest. Most of these routes have a history of such use. Non-motorized trail users (e.g., hikers, horseback riders, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, mountain bikers) may also use forest roads, trails, and most non-designated routes in the forest.

OHV Trails. There are no OHV trail designations proposed for inside the Cloquet Valley State Forest. About 2.9 miles of shared ATV/OHV trail is proposed for scattered state lands in So. St. Louis County, and 5.2 miles are proposed for scattered lands in Carlton County for a total of 8.1 miles.

Snowmobile. There are no proposed changes to DNR Unit Trails or to the existing grant-in-aid snowmobile trail system in and around the Cloquet Valley State Forest.

Proactive Route Closures The Planning Team has recommended a total of 86.6 miles of unsustainable routes be closed to all vehicular use. About half of this mileage (41.9 mi.) is inside the CVSF, and most of the remainder (41.7 mi.) is located on scattered state lands in southern St. Louis County. The rest (3.0 mi.) is located in Carlton County. These routes will be gated, bermed and permanently revegetated.

Non-designated Routes. The proposal is to leave a total of 17.3 miles of routes as ‘non-designated’ outside the CVSF. These are located in ‘limited’ areas south of US Hwy 2 in So. St. Louis and Carlton Counties. These routes will not be maintained for any recreational use, but may be used infrequently for natural resource management

access. Over time these routes may become blocked by deadfalls or revegetate naturally, thereby obliterating the corridor. Non-designated routes will be 'closed' to regular summer season vehicular use, but are available pursuant to the seasonal hunter/trapper exceptions under MS 84.926.

**Table 3. State Forest Road and Trail Designation Summary
for So. St. Louis & Carlton County, Minnesota**

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, 2007. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Route Designation	Cloquet Valley State Forest (miles)		Lands Outside SF So. St. Louis Co. (miles)		Lands Outside SF Carlton Co. (miles)	
System Forest Road	19.5		3.1		1.8	
Min. Maintenance Forest Road	48.7		5.7		3.1	
Non-designated Routes	113.4		100.0		13.6	
Proactive Closures	41.9		41.7		3.0	
In <i>closed</i> forests						
In <i>limited</i> forests			6.7		10.6	
In <i>managed</i> forests (<i>Access Routes</i>)	71.5		51.6			
ATV/OHM Trail	0		2.9		5.2	
ORV Trail	0		0		0.0	
Snowmobile Trail	0		0		0.0	
Non-motorized Trails	8.6		4.5		4.7	

Introduction

Legislation enacted in 2003, and amended in 2005, requires the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to move toward a '*closed unless posted open*' management policy for off-highway vehicles (OHVs) on State Forest lands located south of US Highway 2. Future use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) in the Cloquet Valley State Forest will generally be restricted to roads and trails specifically designated and signed for such use.

Off-highway vehicles include All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), Off-Highway Motorcycles (OHMs), and Off-Road Vehicles (ORVs), such as Jeeps and four-wheel drive trucks, but not snowmobiles or Highway Licensed Vehicles (HLVs). This plan identifies forest roads and trails that the DNR proposes to designate for various motorized and non-motorized uses on state-administered lands within the Cloquet Valley State Forest.

Process

In August 2003, an interdisciplinary team was formed to complete the following tasks:

1. Inventory existing forest access routes on state and county-administered forest lands within the Cloquet Valley State Forest. Check this data for accuracy and completeness.
2. Consider the criteria for classification of forest lands for motor vehicle use and recommend either keeping the current *limited* classification, or changing to *closed*, as per motor vehicle use.
3. Evaluate existing forest access routes using the Rapid Environmental Assessment Checklist. Determine which of these routes is capable of sustaining continued motorized use.
4. Present the team's recommendations for road and trail use designations and forest reclassification for public review and comment.

Description of Lands Covered by the Plan

Located in SE St. Louis County, the Cloquet Valley State Forest is located about 20 miles north of Duluth and 25 miles southeast of Virginia., Minnesota. The forest is accessible via State Hwy 53 on the west, or via County Roads 4, 15 or 44 from the south. The forest is bounded on the east by the Lake County line. Scattered DNR forestry-administered lands outside the statutory forest boundaries, but located within Southern St. Louis and (all of) Carlton Counties, are also addressed in this plan. Forestry-administered lands in Northern St. Louis County will be addressed in a subsequent planning effort.

Land Ownership. This forest classification and road / trail designation plan covers all of the DNR forestry-administered lands within the statutory boundaries of the Cloquet Valley State Forest. Statutory state forest boundary encompasses 327,098 acres; 48,384 acres of which (or 15%) are DNR forestry administered lands. See Table 1.

Table 4. Summary of State Forest Land Ownership: Southern St. Louis & Carlton County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Jan. 2007. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

State Forest Lands	Statutory Acres	DNR-Admin Acres	Inventoried Route Miles
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Scattered Lands. Division of Forestry-administered scattered tracts of land outside the statutory boundaries of the Cloquet Valley State Forest total 77,105 acres in Southern St. Louis County and 18,915 acres in Carlton County. These parcels vary in size and are bounded by county and private land. These lands are also included in this plan.

Under state law, County forest lands within the Cloquet Valley State Forest will be managed similarly to state forest lands (i.e., '*managed*' classification; routes 'open' unless posted 'closed', with no off-trail travel) unless or until the county adopts a formal resolution or ordinance that specifies a different management approach for these lands.

This plan does not address private lands located within the forest. Nor does it address lands located within public road rights-of-way.

Natural Resources Assessment

Landforms and Topography

The Ecological Classification System (ECS) helps describe, map and manage maps ecosystems at various scales using climatic, geologic, topographic, hydrologic, soils and vegetation data. The Cloquet Valley State Forest (CVSF) is entirely within the Laurentian Mixed Forest Province and is about equally split between three subsections: North Shore Highlands, Toimi Uplands, and the Tamarack Lowlands.

Topography ranges from variously rolling in the eastern 1/3 of the CVSF to slightly rolling to flat at its western extent. Numerous creeks, wetlands and lakes occur between the uplands. Of particular note is the Toimi Drumlin Field, a distinct series of low-lying ridges orientated SW-NE, about a mile long, ¼-mile wide, and 30-50 feet high. Long wetlands of similar size and orientation occur between the drumlins. Bedrock outcrops are uncommon in the CVSF and restricted to small, isolated occurrences in the eastern 1/3 of the forest.

Soils. Upland soils include well-drained sand, loam, sandy loam, clay loam and till. Rocks and small boulders are a common component of upland soils, especially in the North Shore Highlands and Toimi Uplands subsections. Wetland soils are typically poorly-drained peat. Ground water levels vary with topography and distance to surface water, although given the overall gentle relief of the CVSF, ground water is often very near the surface. Perched subsurface water tables are also quite common.

Native Plant Communities. Upland mesic forest communities include aspen-birch-fir-white spruce, white, red and jack pine, northern hardwoods (e.g., sugar maple, basswood, red oak, paper birch, yellow birch.), with some upland white cedar. Wet-mesic forest communities commonly occur between mesic uplands and wetlands, and in gentle depressions on upland flats. These forest communities often have a mixed canopy containing aspen, birch, spruce, black ash, red maple, fir, and basswood.

Wetland communities are both forested and non-forested. They include cedar swamp, black ash swamp, black spruce swamp, tamarack swamp, black spruce bog, open bog, poor fen, rich fen, alder swamp, wet meadow/carr, and cattail marsh. Beaver-influenced wetlands are a common feature along smaller flowages.

Rare Species / Natural Heritage Data. Some 84 locations featuring 15 different State-listed species have been documented within the CVSF to-date. Many Colonial Waterbird Nesting Areas (e.g. heron rookeries), high-quality native plant communities, and sites of Statewide Biodiversity Significance have also been documented. Of note, is a MCBS Outstanding Biodiversity Site including portions of the Cloquet River within CVSF that contains critical habitat for one of Minnesota's most significant Wood Turtle populations. The Wood Turtle is a State-Listed Threatened Species.

Surface Waters

Numerous streams and flowages occur within the CVSF, including many designated trout streams and their tributaries. Major flowages include the Cloquet, Little Cloquet, and Whiteface Rivers. All of the streams and rivers within the forest have substantial undeveloped shoreline and minimally developed local watersheds. The Cloquet River is a state-designated Canoe & Boating Route, and it provides habitat for one of Minnesota's largest Wood Turtle populations – a state-listed-threatened species.

Larger lakes within the CVSF include the southern extent of the Whiteface Reservoir, the northern extent of Boulder Lake Reservoir, Wolf Lake, Pequaywan Lake, King Lake, Stone Lake, and Little Stone Lake. Numerous medium and small-sized lakes and small, wetland interior “bog lakes” dot the forest.

Recreational Assessment

Hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, canoeing, skiing, ATV riding and snowmobiling are the most popular outdoor recreational activities. Developed recreational facilities within the Cloquet Valley State Forest include the Indian Lake Campground operated by State Parks; 12 Public Water Accesses (2 carry-down); 42.5 miles of the Cloquet River Canoe & Boating Route; and three grant-in-aid snowmobile trail systems totaling 75.8 miles. One five-mile GIA Ski Trail System, and about 0.2 mile of the North Shore State (Snowmobile) Trail also occur within the forest.

St. Louis County is home to 5 State Parks (9,839 acres), 7 SNAs (7,918 acres), and 16 WMAs (6,606 acres). Only the 120-acre Lieuna WMA is located within the CVSF. About 325,234 acres of the 1,096,187 acre federal BWCAW are also located in St. Louis County. The BWCAW includes 31,284 acres of DNR forest lands in St. Louis County, including all or portions of the Burntside, Bear Island, Kabetogama and Lake Jeanette State Forests. State lands within the BWCAW are closed to motor vehicle use.

The 539,067 acres of US Forest Service administered lands outside the BWCAW in St. Louis County do provide a number of miles of roads and trails currently open to OHV use. The Superior National Forest is currently developing a comprehensive Travel Management Plan for vehicular use of the forest. Cross-country OHV travel on State and Federal lands outside the BWCAW is generally prohibited, except on state lands pursuant to MS Chapt. 84.926 (seasonal hunting trapping exceptions).

Forest Access Route Inventory

2003 Inventory. The 2003 forest access route (road & trail) inventory was updated in 2003. The new access route inventory was intended to accurately depict all routes showing evidence of ongoing human use, with a particular focus on motorized access routes. The 2003 inventory showed a total of 190.2 miles of existing routes (roads and trails) within the Cloquet Valley State Forest. The route inventory of scattered lands outside the CVSF in St. Louis County showed 116.2 miles of existing routes on state lands. The inventory for Carlton County showed 28.4 miles of routes.

Data Sources . Existing road and trail maps were overlaid with various other data layers (e.g., wetlands, forest inventory data, rare natural features data, county data, etc.) to document and display previously inventoried routes. Field crews then located and collected new data on all unmapped forest access routes showing evidence of ongoing human use. Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment was used to record route locations and other attributes (e.g., width, condition class, apparent use, water and wetland crossings, etc). Aerial photo interpretation was used to supplement field data collection.

The 2003 access route inventory data was evaluated by the OHV Field Team using an Arc View tool developed specifically for this purpose. A map of all inventoried forest access routes (i.e., roads and trails) is available on the DNR website and is incorporated into this plan by reference.

Motor Vehicle Use Classification

The DNR classifies State Forest lands as *managed*, *limited*, or *closed* with respect to motor vehicle use (*MR 6100.1950*). The classifications are characterized as follows:

Managed Forest Lands. Forest roads and forest trails are open to recreational motor vehicle use unless posted closed. These forest lands are characterized by a low intensity of use by OHVs, a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities, widely dispersed recreational use, and little competition among visitors for recreational use of the land. Signing and enforcement restrict motor vehicle use in sensitive resource areas and on non-motorized trails.

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

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

Current & Proposed Forest Land Classification. All state forest lands within the Cloquet Valley State Forest, and scattered state lands outside the forest, are currently classified as ‘managed’. State lands within the BWCAW are ‘closed’ to motor vehicle use, and will remain so under this proposal.

This proposal recommends retaining the ‘managed’ classification for all state forest lands located within the statutory boundaries of the CVSF, and for those scattered lands outside the forest that lie north of U.S. Hwy 2 in St. Louis County. Scattered state lands south of U.S Hwy 2 in So. St. Louis and Carlton Counties would be reclassified as ‘limited’. This management approach mirrors that of the St. Louis County Land Department, which manages nearly 900,000 acres in the county; 231,517 of which is located within the CVSF. See acreage totals in Table 1

Table 5. Proposed State Forest Land Classification: So. St. Louis & Carlton County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Jan. 2007. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Proposed Forest Classification	Inside State Forest (acres)	Outside SF So. St. Louis Co. (acres)	Outside SF Carlton Cty (acres)	Totals (acres)
Managed	48,384	72,666	0	121,050
Limited	0	4,439	18,915	23,354
Totals	48,384	77,105	18,915	144,404

This judgment is based upon the Team’s analysis of the eight criteria contained in *MR 6100.1950, Subp. 1-4* which guide the classification of forest lands for motor vehicle use. The team’s analysis of these eight criteria, labeled A-H, is as follows:

A. Resource Sensitivity and Management Objectives

Management objectives for the Cloquet Valley forest include timber production, resource protection and wildlife habitat improvement, and providing a mix of outdoor recreation opportunities. Subsection Forest Resource Management Plans for the area (still under development) also specify goals pertaining to forest management for greater biological diversity, improved forest spatial patterns, and quality forest recreation.

Sensitive natural resources within the Cloquet Valley State Forest, including major wetlands, including large, unfragmented bogs, rare plant and animal communities, are among the resources most affected by motor vehicle use. Some 84 locations featuring 15 different State-listed species have been documented within the CVSF to-date. Many Colonial Waterbird Nesting Areas (e.g. heron rookeries), high-quality native plant communities, and sites of Statewide Biodiversity Significance have also been identified.

Popular recreational activities include hunting, trapping, hiking, snowmobiling OHV riding, and wildlife observation. Other visitors engage in utilitarian pursuits such as minnow or leech trapping, bough harvesting, mushroom and berry collecting, etc. As overall visitor numbers increase, so does the need to more actively manage recreational facilities and regulate user behavior. In order to maintain quality recreational experiences, it has become increasingly necessary to separate incompatible uses (notably motorized and non-motorized activities) and to clearly specify use conditions

and limitations. Consistency in public land management rules and regulations is also critical. The 'managed' classification mirrors that of the St. Louis County Land Department, making regulations more understandable and enforceable across state and county land ownerships.

In addition to being the majority landowner in the CVSF, St. Louis County also administers 660 cabin leases in forested areas of the county, with another 278 located on lakeshore property. Over 400 of these leases are located within the boundaries of the CVSF. As visitor numbers increase, it is increasingly important to control and regulate vehicular use of the forest to avoid unintentional damage to sensitive resources. It is equally important to assure continued vehicular access to these cabin lease sites. The planning team believes that both of these objectives can be met under a 'managed' forest classification.

B. Resource Impact by Motorized and Non-Motorized Use

All recreational trails, both motorized and non-motorized, can impact natural resources during their construction, maintenance and use. Impacts vary by type of use, use season, soil type, slope and drainage, trail design and other factors. Trail users commonly trample vegetation and compact soils along naturally-surfaced trail treadways, and can introduce non-native plant seeds and spores into uninfested areas. Soil compaction, rutting (resulting in root mass disturbance and reduced forest productivity), and soil displacement are often more pronounced along and adjacent to vehicular trails, requiring regular maintenance of trail surfaces and trail drainage structures.

Trail users can also impact wildlife populations, both directly and indirectly. Some wildlife may avoid habitat near trails, while improved hunter access may increase hunting pressure leading to reduced wildlife population levels. Trail routes, many originally developed for timber extraction, may fragment habitat types or be unsuited to continued trail use. The type and extent of impacts vary by activity, by species and by season.

The planning team concluded that the majority of existing inventoried routes in the CVSF could sustain continued vehicular use. Those that cannot are proposed to be closed or designated for non-motorized uses only. The team feels that future resource impacts can be avoided, minimized and substantially reduced from current levels under the 'managed' forest classification.

C. Motorized and Non-Motorized Recreational Opportunity in Area

The Cloquet Valley State Forest is one of eight state forests in St. Louis County. Opportunities for public recreation, both motorized and non-motorized, abound on most of the federal, state and county forest lands in the county. The Superior National Forest's Big Aspen ATV Trails near Britt, and the DNR's Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area near Gilbert are both located within St. Louis County. The Moose Walk / Moose Run ATV Trail is located just east in Lake County. Snowmobile trails that criss-cross the forest, and a portion of the non-motorized Superior Hiking Trail also within the CVSF, will be largely unaffected by the proposed designations in this plan. Continued access, for a mix of outdoor recreational activities, was a key factor in the planning team's recommendation to retain the 'managed' classification for the Cloquet Valley forest.

D. User Needs, such as Trails, Parking, Signs, and Access

There will be little or no change in designated trails, roads, or parking areas regardless of the forest classification. Still, some additional signs will be required at parking areas, along forest roads, and along the perimeter of areas with proposed use limitations. The signs will inform users of any use limitations or other implications regarding their use of the forest. Snowmobiles and non-motorized trail users will be largely unaffected by forest classification. Off-highway vehicle access, on the other hand, will be impacted due to proposed route closures, and the designation of areas with limitations on off-trail and non-designated trail use (pursuant to MS Chap. 84.926, Subd. 5). See Appendix C for a description of these areas.

E. Degree and Trend of Motor Vehicle Use in the Area

Off-highway Vehicle use has increased in recent years, even though there are no designated OHV trails in the Cloquet Valley State Forest. ATVs are the most commonly used OHV in the forest. The majority of the use seems to be by local hunters (those who live in or near the forest) who enter the forest from public roads, private lands or recreational cabin lease sites.

Traffic levels should not be significantly affected by forest reclassification or the designation of existing routes. Those who currently use OHVs in the Cloquet Valley Forest on roads, designated trails or non-designated routes may continue to do so under a 'managed' classification, except where routes are posted closed. Utilitarian use will continue as before. Off-trail OHV use, except for that pursuant to MS 84.926 (big game hunting or furbearer trapping), is illegal and will remain so under this proposal.

In the recently released "2004 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey of Minnesotans" [MN DNR, 2005] and supporting documents, MN DNR projects a 252% increase in off-road ATV driving over the 10-year period of 2004-2014. According to this study, while other outdoor activities are expected to remain stable or experience participation declines of between 11 and 25 percent, ATV riding is expected to increase dramatically due to the steady, rapid growth of off-road riding over the past decade. Although it is unclear how long this trend will continue, or whether this huge projected increase will actually materialize or not, substantially increased demand for OHV trail opportunities is expected in coming years. A 'managed' classification allows for future consideration of sustainable OHV trail development in response to demonstrated user demands.

F. Degree and Trend of Non-Motor Use in the Area

Trails used by hikers, bikers, cross-country skiers and horseback riders are located throughout the planning area. Demand for non-motorized trails will continue at roughly current levels (as per MN DNR, 2005 above). Non-motorized forest users, largely unaffected by this proposal, may continue to use any inventoried forest access route, except those posted as closed to all public use. Another 17.8 miles of hunter walking trail are proposed to be designated; 8.6 miles inside the CVSF, and 9.2 miles outside the forest in So. St. Louis and Carlton Counties. The intent is to provide a non-motorized hunting experience for those who prefer a quieter, walking-only hunting area.

G. Competing Interests among Different User Groups

There exists a broad diversity of values and expectations related to use of public lands. Conflicts can and do occur. Given the limited size and irregular pattern of state land ownership, it is impossible to completely separate motorized and non-motorized forest users. It is equally clear that there is no public land allocation strategy that will satisfy all interests. Although some level of conflict or annoyance is probably inevitable, the planning team did make every effort to reduce existing problems and avoid future conflict through their forest classification and access route recommendations. The Team's pursuit of recreational balance was, in large part, the impetus for proposing that five areas (totaling over 16,400 acres) be established with limitations on off-trail and non-designated trail use.

H. Public Safety and Law Enforcement Concerns

This proposal is an important first step towards attaining 'managed use of managed trails'. It recommends a series of actions, including more than 25 miles of motor and non-motor trail designations, and over 85 miles of route closures, in order to better control motorized access within the forest. By concentrating motorized use on fewer, more sustainable routes, and by establishing several areas with limitations on off-trail and non-designated trail use (per MS 84.926, subd. 5), the Planning Team believes that resource protection and public safety can be improved over current conditions. Active trail monitoring and stepped-up field enforcement will ensure that trail conditions do not erode with time, and that user compliance is maintained at expected levels.

Proposed Limitations on Off-Trail and Non-Designated Trail Use.

The Cloquet Valley Team further recommends that the Commissioner invoke authority granted pursuant to MN Stat. Chap. 84.926, Subd. 5, in order to limit (vehicular) off-trail and non-designated trail use within five areas totaling 16,416 acres (gross) identified in Appendix C. By so doing, state forest lands within the boundaries of these areas would not be subject to the exceptions provided for in MN Stat. Chap. 84.926 Subd. 2 & 4, which would otherwise allow for ATV and HLV use of non-designated routes for certain hunting and trapping purposes by licensed persons during open seasons.

All trail access and entry points, and the area boundaries themselves, will be clearly mapped and posted to inform forest users of these limitations. Designated State Forest Roads or trails within these areas would remain open to vehicle use, subject to the general prohibition on off-trail OHV travel, and pursuant to any temporary road closures or seasonal road-use restrictions. However, no OHV or HLV use of unsigned or undesignated routes in the areas would be permitted at any time.

This prohibition would apply only to state forest lands within the specified areas, and only to the use of ATVs and HLVs during legal hunting and trapping seasons. It does not modify the ‘managed’ forest classification proposed for the larger Cloquet Valley State Forest. Vehicular use of State Forest Roads and grant-in-aid snowmobile trails (by snowmobiles), would be unaffected. However, any future road or trail development proposals through these areas would be evaluated carefully through the department’s interdisciplinary project review process, recognizing that vehicular use may be inconsistent with the management objectives that prompted these designations.

Proposed Forest Road & Trail Designations

The planning team evaluated all inventoried forest access routes and recommended that it either be designated as a road or trail, be closed to future use, or that it remain ‘non-designated’. For existing designated roads and trails, the presumption was that the current designation and uses would be maintained, unless there was a compelling reason to propose changes. Under the ‘managed’ classification, all routes not designated as forest roads or recreational trails will remain open to vehicular use, subject to state land prohibitions on rutting, erosion and damage to living vegetation.

State Forest Roads

Various state statutes and rules govern the designation and use of State Forest Roads. Key passages 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*)

The DNR divides State Forest Roads into two classes – System Forest Roads (SFRs) and Minimum Maintenance Roads (MMRs) – based on their condition, intended use and planned maintenance level.

System Forest Roads (SFRs) 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 graveled and maintained to allow travel by highway-licensed vehicles. System roads are typically open to all motor vehicles, including OHVs, but may be closed seasonally or temporarily to address specific road or fire conditions. State Forest Roads are, by definition, not regular public roads. They are principally intended to serve state forest management and protection needs, and they do not provide legal access to private property.

The Planning Team recommended the designation of 19.5 miles of System Forest Roads inside the CVSF, and 4.9 miles of SFR on scattered lands outside of State Forest boundaries.

Minimum Maintenance Roads (MMRs) 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. MMRs will be graded and graveled as needed for forest management purposes, but may not always be usable by low-clearance vehicles. MMRs are signed and may be gated and/or closed during certain times of the year.

The Planning Team proposes designation of 48.7 miles of MMRs inside the CVSF, and 8.8 miles on scattered state lands outside the forest.

State Forest Roads are generally open to use by both highway-licensed vehicles and off-highway vehicles (ATVs, OHMs, and ORVs). However, roads may be temporarily closed, at any time, to some or all vehicular use due to public safety and/or natural resource protection considerations. Minimum maintenance roads are more likely to be subjected to travel restrictions than are higher standard system forest roads.

Recreational Trail Designations

Non-Motorized Trails. The Planning Team has proposed the designation of 8.6 miles of hunter walking trails inside the CVSF, and another 9.2 miles of trail on scattered state lands outside the forest. Non-motorized trail users (e.g., hikers, horseback riders, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, mountain bikers) may also use roads, trails, and most non-designated routes in the forest.

Snowmobile. There are no proposed changes to DNR Unit Trails, or to the existing grant-in-aid snowmobile trail system, in or around the Cloquet Valley State Forest.

OHV Trails. There are no OHV trail designations proposed for the Cloquet Valley State Forest. About 2.9 miles of shared ATV/OHM trail is proposed for scattered state lands in So. St. Louis County, and 5.2 miles are proposed for scattered lands in Carlton County for a total of 8.1 miles. Interest in pursuing various grant-in-aid OHV trail projects remains high (below).

Non-designated Routes. The proposal is to leave a total of 17.3 miles of routes as 'non-designated' outside the CVSF. These are located in 'limited' areas south of US Hwy 2 in So. St. Louis and Carlton Counties. These routes will not be maintained for any recreational use, but may be used for natural resource management access. Over time these routes may become blocked by deadfalls or revegetate naturally, thereby obliterating the corridor. These routes will be 'closed' to regular summer season vehicular use, but are available pursuant to the hunter/trapper exceptions under MS 84.926.

Proactive Route Closures The Planning Team has recommended a total of 86.6 miles of unsustainable routes be closed to all vehicular use. About half of this mileage (41.9 mi.) is inside the CVSF, and most of the remainder (41.7 mi.) is located on scattered state lands in southern St. Louis County. The rest (3.0 mi.) is located in Carlton County. These routes will be gated, bermed and revegetated.

**Table 6. State Forest Road and Trail Designation Summary
for So. St. Louis & Carlton County, Minnesota**

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, 2007. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Route Designation	Cloquet Valley State Forest (miles)		Lands Outside SF So. St. Louis Co. (miles)		Lands Outside SF Carlton Co. (miles)	
System Forest Road	19.5		3.1		1.8	
Min. Maintenance Forest Road	48.7		5.7		3.1	
Non-designated Routes	113.4		100.0		13.6	
Proactive Closures	41.9		41.7		3.0	
In <i>closed</i> forests						
In <i>limited</i> forests			6.7		10.6	
In <i>managed</i> forests (<i>Access Routes</i>)	71.5		51.6			
ATV/OHM Trail*	0		2.9		5.2	
ORV Trail*	0		0		0.0	
Snowmobile Trail	0		0		0.0	
Non-motorized Trails	8.6		4.5		4.7	

Grant-in-Aid ATV Trail Proposals. The DNR has received at least two specific proposals to develop ATV trails in the CVSF. Neither of these proposals has yet been acted upon pending completion of the current forest classification and route designation exercise. Neither of these proposals may be authorized through the current process, but must be separately submitted, reviewed and approved by the DNR Area & Regional Staff. The pending ATV proposals are as follows.

Morcom Lake ATV Trail. This 20-mile loop trail was proposed to circle Morcom Lake in the northwest portion of the forest. Most of the alignment uses St. Louis County timber management roads and existing trails. Upon initial review, the DNR rejected a 5-mile portion of the proposed trail due to a sizable wetland crossing on the west side of Morcom Lake. The DNR instead has recommended a 4.5 mile re-route that will require some new trail construction, but that keeps the trail entirely east of Morcom Lake and still allows for a loop trail. The new alignment would total 19.8 miles with 1.6 miles of new construction required. This project application is still pending.

Island Lake to Pequaywam Lake ATV Trail. The North Shore Area ATV Club has proposed a trail in the east-central part of the CVSF. The trail would extend from Island Lake, outside the forest, north to Pequaywam Lake, and then makes a large loop extending easterly into Lake County. Of the 57.6 miles of original proposal, 27 miles used road ditches or the road surfaces themselves. The club later modified its proposal in response to DNR and local road authority concerns, and re-presented it to reviewers. Faced with still more controversy from Pequaywam Lake homeowners, the club is now considering a revised proposal using a new trail alignment which avoids those areas in close proximity to occupied dwellings or seasonal properties. Interest in pursuing this project, in some form, continues to be very high among club members.

Plan Adoption & Implementation

A public notice of this proposal will be published in the *State Register* and the legal newspapers for St. Louis and Carlton Counties announcing the public review period and public meeting date. A statewide DNR news release and paid legal notices will accompany the notice, and a public meeting will be held in May 2007 to invite comment on this proposal.

The Planning Team will compile, synthesize and evaluate comments received during the public review period. The DNR's official response to comments and resulting changes to the final plan will be summarized and made available pursuant to plan adoption and implementation. Final forest classification and route designation decisions will be implemented via a series of Commissioner's Orders which will be published in the *Minnesota State Register*. All final plans, maps, decision documents and orders will be posted at www.dnr.state.mn.us.

Road Signing Projects

After the Commissioner's orders are published, but before their effective dates, the DNR will implement this plan by signing roads, trails, parking and staging areas, and major entry points to forest lands informing users of the forest classification and implications for motor vehicle use. Signs identifying designated forest roads, and clarifying motor vehicle use regulations on designated forest roads, will also be conspicuously posted throughout the forest.

Plan Effective Date

The anticipated effective date for the classification of the Cloquet Valley State Forest, and for the designation of roads, trails and areas with limitations on off-road and non-designated trails use, is on or about September 1, 2008. The actual date will be listed on the final signed Commissioner's Orders which are published in the State Register.

APPENDIX A

Minnesota Statutes & Rules Related to State Forest Classification

Laws of MN 2003, Chap. 128, Article 1, Sect. 167, as amended by M.L. 2005, 1st Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 2, Sect. 152]

Sec. 167. [Forest Land Off-Highway Vehicle Use Reclassification.]

Subdivision 1. [Forest Classification Status Review.]

(a) By December 31, 2006, the commissioner of natural resources shall complete a review of the forest classification status of all state forests classified as managed or limited, all forest lands under the authority of the commissioner as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 89.001, subdivision 13, and lands managed by the commissioner under Minnesota Statutes, section 282.011. The review must be conducted on a forest-by-forest and area-by-area basis in accordance with the process and criteria under Minnesota Rules, part 6100.1950. Except as provided in paragraph (d), after each forest is reviewed, the commissioner must change its status to limited or closed, and must provide a similar status for each of the other areas subject to review under this section after each individual review is completed.

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

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

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

Subdivision 2. [Temporary Suspension of Environmental Review.]

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

84.926, Minnesota Statutes 2005, Vehicle use on public lands; exceptions.

Subdivision 1. Exception by permit. Notwithstanding sections [84.773](#), subdivision 1, and [84.777](#), on a case by case basis, the commissioner may issue a permit authorizing a person to operate an off-highway vehicle on individual public trails under the commissioner's jurisdiction during specified times and for specified purposes.

Subd. 2. All-terrain vehicles; managed or limited forests; off trail. Notwithstanding section [84.777](#), but subject to the commissioner's authority under subdivision 5, on state forest lands classified as managed or limited, other than the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest, a person may use an all-terrain vehicle off forest trails or forest roads when:

- (1) hunting big game or transporting or installing hunting stands during October, November, and December, when in possession of a valid big game hunting license;
 - (2) retrieving big game in September, when in possession of a valid big game hunting license;
 - (3) tending traps during an open trapping season for protected furbearers, when in possession of a valid trapping license;
- or
- (4) trapping minnows, when in possession of a valid minnow dealer, private fish hatchery, or aquatic farm license.

Subd. 3. All-terrain vehicles; closed forests; hunting.

Notwithstanding section [84.777](#), the commissioner may determine whether all-terrain vehicles are allowed on specific forest roads, on state forest lands classified as closed, for the purpose of hunting big game during an open big game season. The determination shall be by written order as published in the State Register and is exempt from chapter 14. Section [14.386](#) does not apply.

Subd. 4. Off-road and all-terrain vehicles; limited or managed forests; trails. Notwithstanding section [84.777](#), but subject to the commissioner's authority under subdivision 5, on state forest lands classified as limited or managed, other than the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest, a person may use vehicles registered under chapter 168 or section [84.798](#) or [84.922](#) on forest trails that are not designated for a specific use when:

- (1) hunting big game or transporting or installing hunting stands during October, November, and December, when in possession of a valid big game hunting license;
 - (2) retrieving big game in September, when in possession of a valid big game hunting license;
 - (3) tending traps during an open trapping season for protected furbearers, when in possession of a valid trapping license;
- or
- (4) trapping minnows, when in possession of a valid minnow dealer, private fish hatchery, or aquatic farm license.

Subd. 5. Limitations on off-trail and undesignated trail use. The commissioner may designate areas on state forest lands that are not subject to the exceptions provided in subdivisions 2 and 4. Such designations are not subject to the rulemaking provisions of chapter 14 and section [14.386](#) does not apply. Before designating such areas, the commissioner shall hold a public meeting 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 designation. Sixty days before the public meeting, notice of the proposed designation shall be published in the legal newspapers that serve the counties in which the lands are located, in a statewide Department of Natural Resources news release, and in the State Register.

HIST: 1984 c 647 s 5; 1986 c 444; 2003 c 128 art 1 s 31; 1Sp2005 c 1 art 2 s 45

Minnesota Rules Chapter 6100.1950, Subp. 1 – 8

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

Off-highway vehicle use of state lands restricted.

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

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

HIST: 2003 c 128 art 1 s 21

APPENDIX B

Summary Tables – Draft Proposal

Table 1. Summary of State Forest Land Ownership: Southern St. Louis & Carlton County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Jan. 2007. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

State Forest Lands	Statutory Acres	DNR-Admin Acres	Inventoried Route Miles
Cloquet Valley State Forest	327,098	48,384	1,017.4
Outside State Forest – So. St. Louis Co.	NA	77,105	116.3
Outside State Forest – Carlton Co.	NA	18,915	28.5
Totals	327,098	144,404	1,162.2

Table 2. Proposed State Forest Land Classification: So. St. Louis & Carlton County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Jan. 2007. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Proposed Forest Classification	Inside State Forest (acres)	Outside SF So. St. Louis Co. (acres)	Outside SF Carlton Cty (acres)	Totals (acres)
Managed	48,384	72,666	0	121,050
Limited	0	4,439	18,915	23,354
Totals	48,384	77,105	18,915	144,404

Table 3. Summary of Proposed Road & Trail Designations on State & County Lands For Southern St. Louis and Carlton Counties.

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, 2007. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Summary Report	Final Plan
<u>Category</u>	<u>Miles of Road & Trail</u>
Total Inventoried Routes	1,162.1 miles
Off-Highway Vehicle Trails	8.1 miles
Non-Motor Trails	38.1 miles
Non-Designated Routes ('limited' forest)	17.3 miles
Proactive Closure	230.6 miles
System State Forest Roads	112.4 miles
Minimum Maint. State Forest Roads	261.8 miles
Forest Access Routes ('managed' forest)	493.7 miles
Total of All Motorized Routes	876 miles

Table 4. Proposed Road and Trail Designations Inside the Cloquet Valley State Forest

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Jan. 2007. MN DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Summary Report Category	Inside State Forest (Miles)
Total Inventoried Routes	190.2 miles
Off-Highway Vehicle Trails	0.0 miles
Non-Motorized Trails	8.6 miles
Non-Designated Routes ('limited' forest)	NA
Proactive Closure	41.9 miles
System State Forest Roads	19.5 miles
Minimum Maint. State Forest Roads	48.7 miles
Forest Access Trails ('managed' forest)	71.5 miles
Total of All Motorized Routes	139.7 miles

Table 5. Summary of Proposed Road & Trail Designations on State Forest Lands Outside State Forest Boundaries in South St. Louis and Carlton Counties, Minnesota.

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, 2007. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Summary Report Category	South St. Louis County Miles of Road & Trail	Carlton County Miles of Road & Trail
Total Inventoried Routes	116.2 miles	28.4 miles
Off-Highway Vehicle Trails	2.9 miles	5.2 miles
Snowmobile Trails (on state land)	41.1 miles	9.7 miles
Non-Motor Trails	4.5 miles	4.7 miles
Non-Designated Routes ('limited' forest)	6.7 miles	10.6 miles
Proactive Closure	41.7 miles	3.0 miles
System State Forest Roads	3.1 miles	1.8 miles
Minimum Maint. State Forest Roads	5.7 miles	3.1 miles
Forest Access Trails ('managed' forest)	51.6 miles	na
Total of All Motorized Routes	63.3 miles	10.1 miles

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APPENDIX C

Limitations on Off-Trail & Non-Designated Trail Use

Cloquet Valley State Forest St. Louis County, MN

The Cloquet Valley Planning Team recommends that state lands within the following areas (all within the Cloquet Valley State Forest) be classified pursuant to MS 84.926, Subd 5 and that limitations be placed on the use of off-trail and non-designated routes pursuant to statutory provisions. OHV/HLV use of existing State Forest Roads and/or designated trails would be unaffected. **Total (5 Sites) = 16,416.5 Gross Acres.** [Includes St. Louis County tax-forfeited forest lands]

Site 1. Mud Lake Hardwoods, Section 16 of T52N R16W (locational center)

- Size: 1,245.5 acres.
- Ownership: Approx. 50% State, 50% St. Louis County tax-forfeited lands.
- Boundaries: Follow existing trails and forest roads.
- Contains state-designated northern hardwood old-growth forest; County lands with mature northern hardwood forest.
- Sensitive soils subject to rutting.
- Most trails in the area proposed for proactive closure by the CVSF Planning Team.
- Good access to the perimeters via existing trails and roads.
- No St. Louis County cabin leases within the area.
- Within a *preliminary* MCBS Site of High Biodiversity Significance.

Site 2. Boulder Lake North, Section 12 of T53N R15W (locational center)

- Size: 816 acres.
- Ownership: 100% St. Louis County tax-forfeited forest lands.
- Boundaries: Follow the North Boulder Lake road, an unnamed tributary to Boulder Lake, and established section lines;
- Contains an existing St. Louis County Grouse Management Area.
- North Boulder Lake Road is gated, as is the trail leading into the Grouse Management Area.
- Accessible by HLV, but contains no St. Louis County cabin leases.
- Partially within a *preliminary* MCBS Site of High Biodiversity Significance.
- Includes a mix of upland forest and wetland native plant communities;
- Contains lowland cedar, good deer wintering area.

Site 3. Cloquet River Northeast, Section 1 of T55N R12W (locational center)

- Size: 988 acres
- Ownership: Approx. 75% St. Louis County tax-forfeited forest land, 25% state forest land.
- Boundaries: State Forest boundary, existing trails, Cloquet River, and quarter section lines;
- No inventoried motor routes.

Proposed Areas With Use Limitations – Cloquet Valley SF
St. Louis County, MN
[con't]

Site 3. Cloquet River Northeast, Section 1 of T55N R12W [con't]

- Contains designated State old-growth forest (lowland hardwood cedar); County lands also contain old growth stands.
- Access from the Jolly Rancher road
- Contains 5 documented records of wood turtle (State-listed threatened).
- Within a MCBS Site of Biodiversity Significance ranked high.

Site 4. Esswhter Lake, Section 6 of T53N R12W (locational center)

- Size: 9,947 acres.
- Ownership: Approx. 90% St. Louis County tax-forfeited forest land, Approx. 10% state forest land.
- Boundaries: Existing trails, Little Cloquet River, South Branch Mud Creek, West Branch Knife River, Rossini Road, section lines, and ownership boundaries.
- Includes the State of Minnesota Lieuna Wildlife Management Area.
- Access from the Hart Lake & Rossini Road, and the Lieuna Lake (St.L Co. forest road).
- Large, remote area with few inventoried routes. Contains undeveloped lake and river shore.
- Within three MCBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance ranked high and moderate.
- Contains a portion of a GIA snowmobile trail and one St. Louis County cabin lease.
- Contains a variety of upland and wetland native plant communities.

Site 5. Marshall Trail South Section 3 of T54N R13W (locational center)

- Size: 3,420 acres;
- Ownership: 100% St. Louis County tax-forfeited forest lands;
- Boundaries: Marshall Trail (forest road), existing trails, Cloquet River, quarter-section lines.
- Within MCBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance ranked outstanding and high.
- Good access off of existing trails, but low existing trail density.
- Contains documented records of wood turtles (State-listed threatened);
- Contains 4 miles of undeveloped Cloquet River shore line;
- Contains a mix of upland and wetland native plant communities.

Miscellaneous Comments on CVSF Areas With Limitations on Use

- Most of these lands are St. Louis County tax-forfeited forest lands. St. Louis County Land Dept. officials are supportive of this proposed motor-restricted designation.
- The 429 cabin leases in CVSF necessitate (motorized) cabin access trails, and result in many miles of user-developed trails extending to/from the cabin lease sites. The proposed non-motorized areas help to

'balance' the recreational opportunities by providing an alternative for those who wish to use the forest absent motor influences.

- All of these areas are close to the Duluth metro-area, and are accessible to Twin Cities residents via I-35, and would therefore provide ready access to non-motorized recreation opportunities for a potentially large number of Minnesotans.

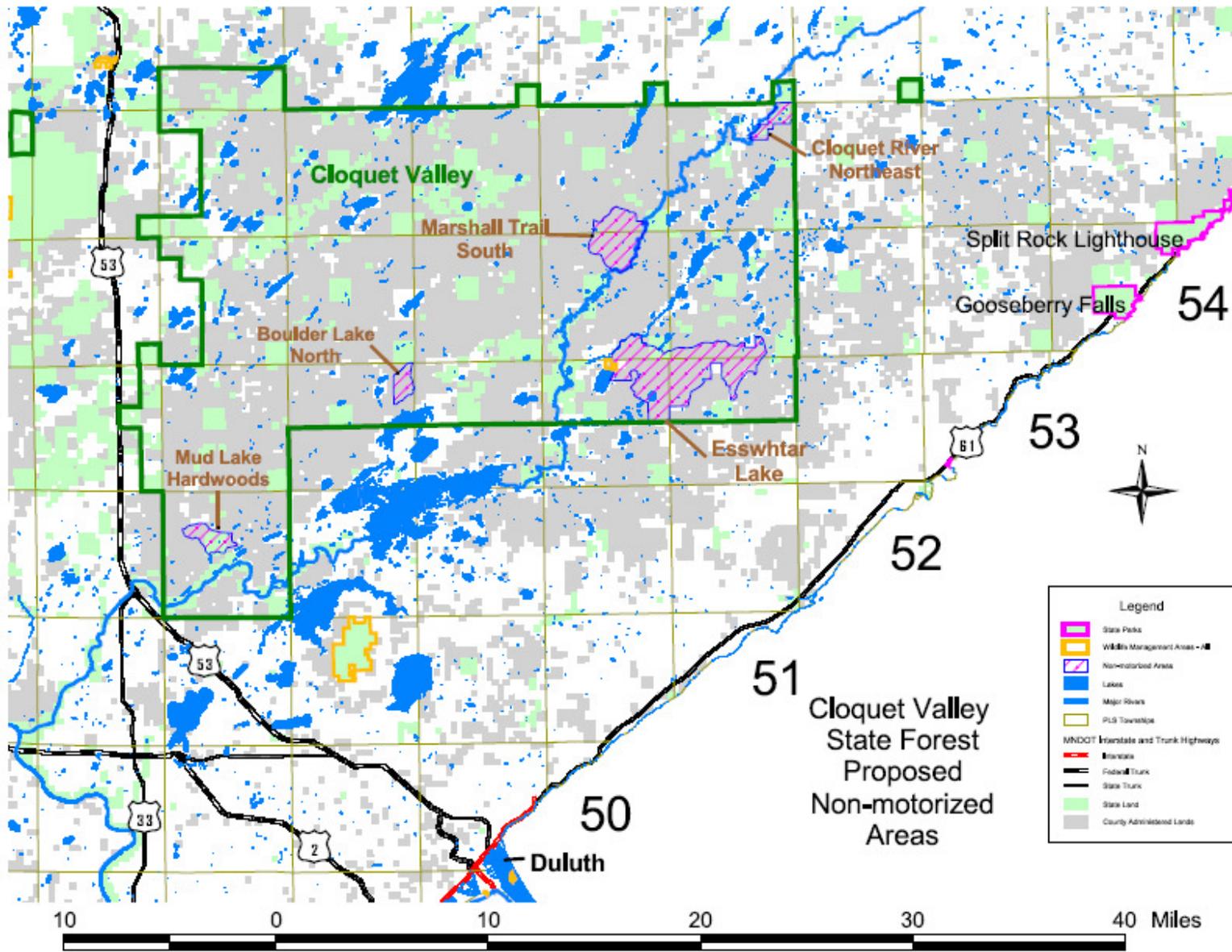
Cloquet River Buffer

The CVSF Planning Team made a specific review of the ¼ mile buffer on both sides of the Cloquet River. The Cloquet River is a high quality waterway that follows its natural meander and, especially within the CVSF, contains an intact shoreline bordered by native plant communities. It is a State-designated canoe route, a Site of Outstanding Biodiversity Significance (within the CVSF), and provides habitat for one of Minnesota's most significant populations of wood turtles (a State-listed Threatened species).

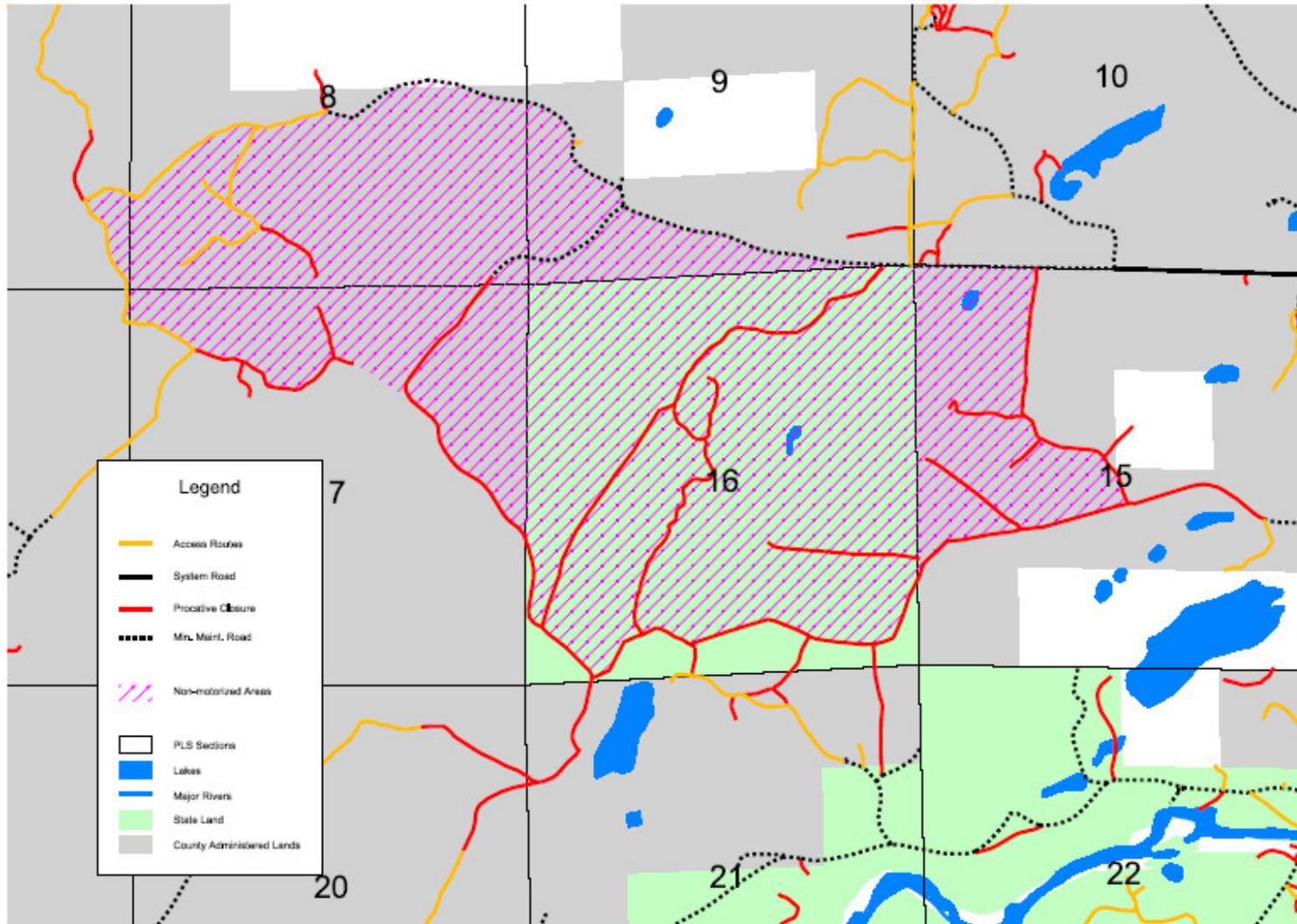
The DNR has developed an MOU between Divisions that addresses special management considerations within a ¼ mile buffer on both sides of the river. There is also a Cloquet River Management Plan that addresses the significance of this waterway. The St. Louis County Land Department also recognizes the unique value of the Cloquet River in their management decisions.

User-developed trails near the river have resulted in serious rutting and subsequent sediment loading into the river in some areas. For this reason, the CVSF Planning Team completed a specific review of trails within the ¼ mile buffer. Trails that parallel the river and/or dead-end at the river were considered for closure to motorized traffic. At the same time, every effort was made to maintain public access to the river and preserve established public access points and developed forest roads near the river to accommodate motorized traffic.

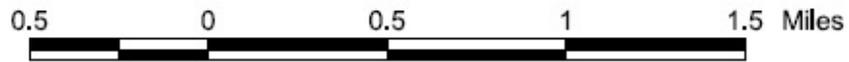
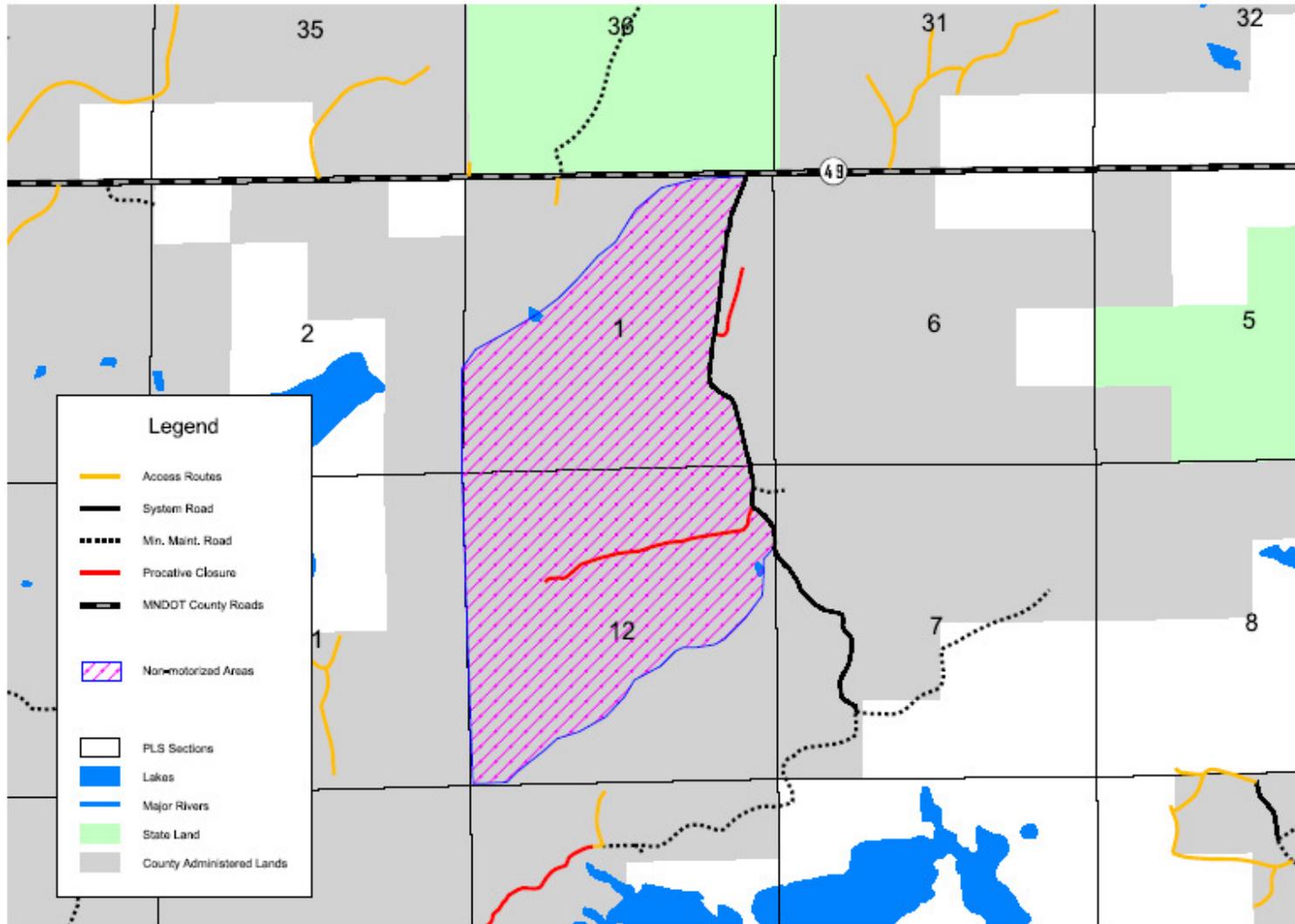
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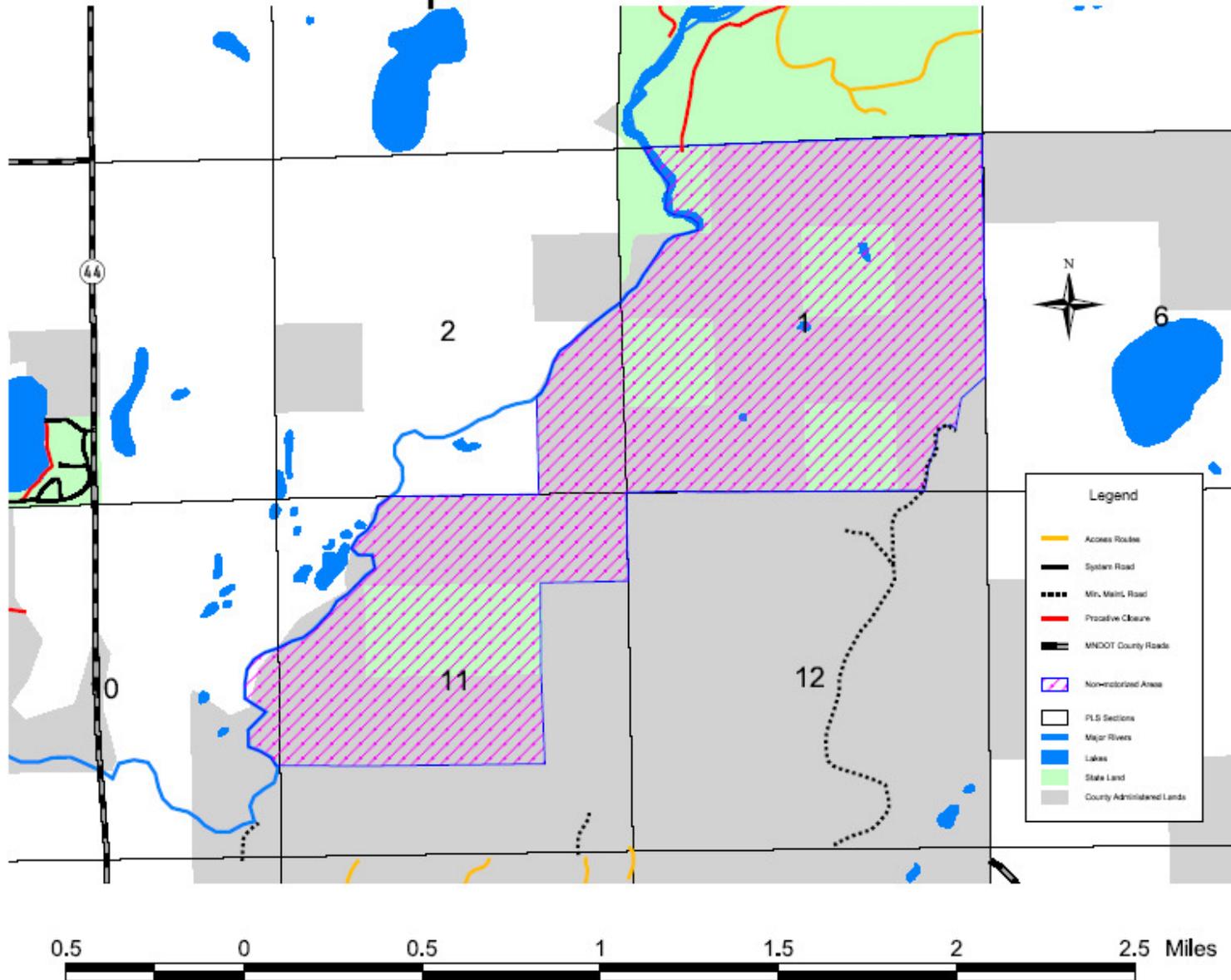
Mud Lake Hardwoods



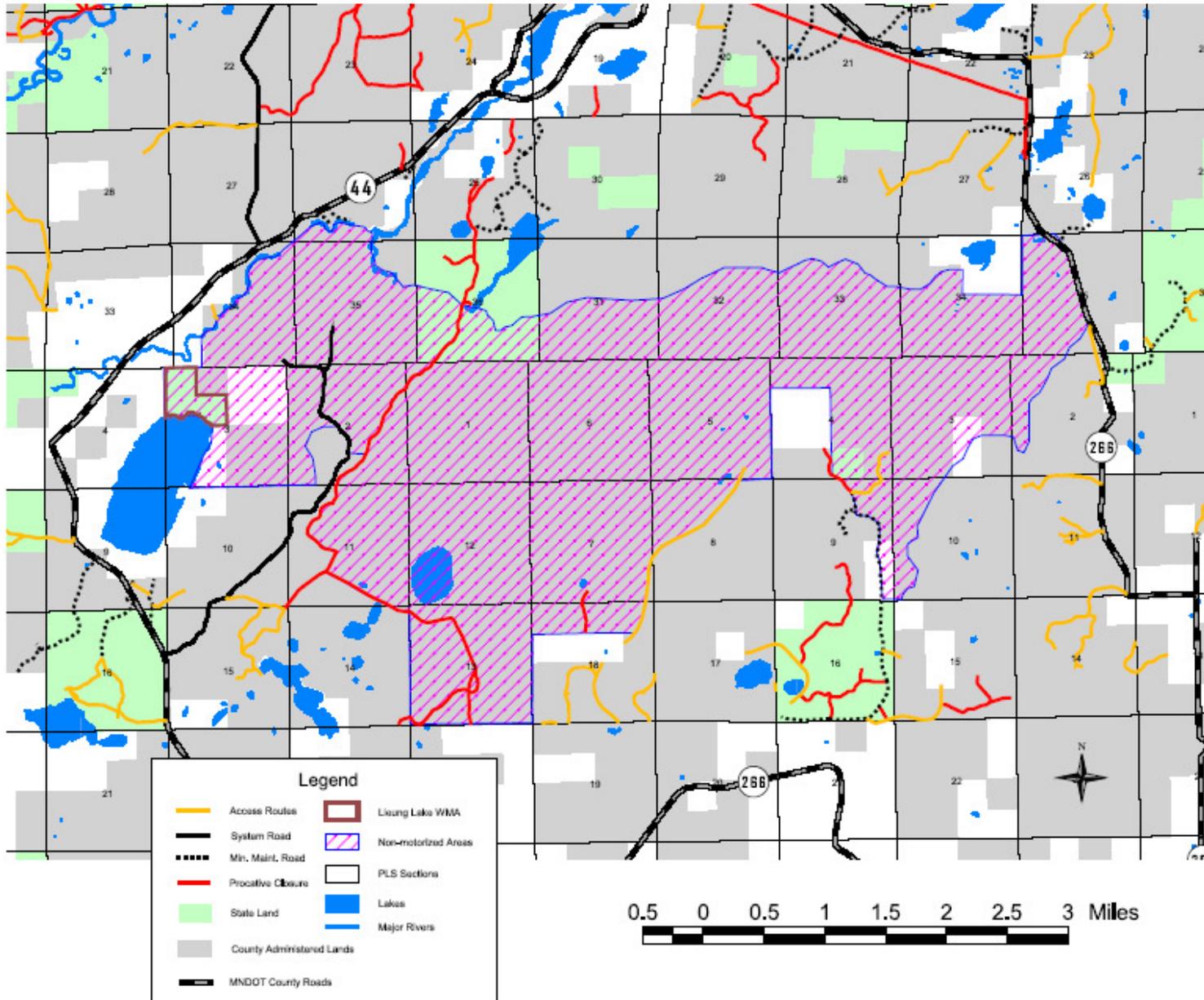
Boulder Lake North



Cloquet River Northeast



Esswhtar Lake



Marshall Trail South

