

Forest Classification
And
Forest Road and Trail Designations
For
State Forest Lands in Crow Wing County

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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 motor vehicle use classification of state forest lands. In conjunction with the classification review, the DNR identifies routes to be designated as forest roads and trails. Following public review and comment on the proposed classification and road/trail designations, the Commissioner of Natural Resources implements the classification and designation decisions by publication of written orders. The Commissioner's Orders provide the framework for management of public access to state forest lands.

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 document addresses most state forest lands in Crow Wing County in central Minnesota.

Given the intermingled private, county, and state land ownership pattern in Crow Wing County, the DNR coordinated its work with the Crow Wing County Land Department. State and county land managers jointly developed the recommended classifications and designations. While this plan documents recommendations for both state- and county-administered lands, the Commissioner of Natural Resources will only designate roads and trails on DNR-administered state forest lands.

1.2 Lands Covered by this Plan

This plan proposes motor vehicle use classifications and forest road/trail designations on about 24,000 acres of state forest land in the Crow Wing State Forest, Emily State Forest, and DNR administered forest lands outside of state forest boundaries in Crow Wing County. It does not cover the portion of the Land O' Lakes State Forest located in Crow Wing County.

The Crow Wing County Board adopted a resolution classifying county administered forest lands in an 'expanded work area' surrounding the Crow Wing and Emily state forests. The Crow Wing County Land Department is proposing forest road and trail designations on about 17,000 acres of county forest land in the expanded work area. This plan does not cover the majority of the county forest lands, which are located outside of the expanded work area.

1.3 Motor Vehicle Use Classifications

Division of Forestry administered lands in Crow Wing County must be reclassified as *limited* or *closed* to comply with current Minnesota law. State forest lands within the statutory boundaries of the Crow Wing and Emily state forests will be classified as *limited*. Parcels of DNR - Division of Forestry administered lands outside of state forest boundaries will be classified as either *limited* or *closed* based on resource conditions. Most of the state forest acreage located outside of state forest boundaries will be classified as *limited*. Nine parcels totaling 877 acres of state forest land will be classified as *closed*.

Crow Wing County proposes to classify most their lands in the expanded work area as limited. The Scrub Oak Area and the Milford Mine Memorial Park are county non-motorized areas. The county is not classifying their lands outside of the expanded work area at this time.

1.4 Forest Route Inventory

In 2003 and 2004, DNR staff made an effort to inventory the location and condition of all existing routes on state- and county-administered forest lands that show evidence of ongoing human use. The inventory identified about 451 miles of routes on state and county forest lands in Crow Wing County. About 347 miles are located on county forest lands and 105 miles on state forest lands. Crow Wing County addressed 90 miles of routes on county forest lands in the expanded work area and previously designated GIA ATV trails in Fort Ripley and Roosevelt townships.

1.5 Route Designations

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

Route Designation	State Land (miles)		County Land ¹ (miles)		Total (miles)
Forest Roads	24.1		22.2		46.3
System Forest Roads	0.0		0.0		0.0
Minimum Maintenance Forest Roads	24.1		22.2		46.3
Trails	22.7		31.0		53.7
ATV / OHM Trails ²	17.3		24.5		
Hiking Trails	2.7		0.0		
Hunter Walking Trails	2.7		0.0		
Scrub Oak Non-motorized Area	0.0		6.5		
Non-designated Routes	57.8		36.9		94.7
On <i>limited</i> state forest lands (hunting/trapping exceptions apply)	48.7		x		
On <i>closed</i> state forest lands (no hunting/trapping exceptions)	9.1		x		
On county forest lands (hunting/trapping exceptions apply except in Scrub Oak and Milford Mine Non-motorized Areas)	x		36.9		
Total Inventoried Routes	104.6		90.1		194.7

¹ Only includes Crow Wing County administered lands in the Expanded Work Area around Crow Wing and Emily state forests and county lands in Fort Ripley and Roosevelt townships (existing GIA ATV trails). Does not include the majority of county administered lands.

² Includes the portion of the existing Pine Center and Fort Ripley/Ripley Connection GIA ATV trails located on state or county administered lands.

1.6 Implementation and Monitoring

The Commissioner of Natural Resources will issue Commissioner's Orders to change the motor vehicle use classification and to designate forest roads and trails. The anticipated effective date for the classification changes and route designations is December 31, 2008.

2 BACKGROUND

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages nearly 4 million acres of state forest land for the people of Minnesota. Minnesota's state forests are managed to produce timber, provide outdoor recreation, protect watersheds, and perpetuate rare and distinctive species of native flora and fauna. State forests are managed to ensure they remain healthy, vital, and productive for present and 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 have developed recreation facilities such as campgrounds, day-use areas, and trails for various motorized and non-motorized uses. Minnesota statutes set broad direction for management of state forests by directing the Commissioner of Natural Resources to:

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

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

Minnesota Laws 2003, Chapter 128, Article 1, Section 167 (as amended in 2005 and 2007) directs the Commissioner of Natural Resources to review the motor vehicle use classification of state forest lands. In conjunction with the classification review, the DNR identifies routes to be designated as forest roads and trails. Following public review and comment on the proposed classification and road/trail designations, the Commissioner of Natural Resources implements the classification and designation decisions by publication of written orders. The Commissioner's Orders provide the framework for management of public access to state forest lands.

2.1 Process

A DNR 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 state forest lands in the planning area.
2. Consider the criteria for classification of state forest lands for motor vehicle use and recommend appropriate classification(s).

3. Evaluate the inventoried forest 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 a comprehensive inventory of forest routes – roads, trails, and other routes showing evidence of ongoing human use. Prepare maps showing the routes.
2. Conduct work sessions to make preliminary route designation and use recommendations based on inventory data, staff knowledge, and public input from the open houses.
3. Review preliminary designations for consistency with statutory direction and agency management guidelines.
4. Prepare designation plans and maps for internal agency and public review and comment.

The goal was to develop an ecologically sustainable and socially acceptable approach to manage recreational and utilitarian public access to 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 lands. Individuals have widely varying values and expectations related to the use of public forest lands and recreational motor vehicles. In our diverse society there is no public access management scheme 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 all state forest lands in Crow Wing County in central Minnesota except for that portion of the Land O' Lakes State Forest located in Crow Wing County. The entire Land O' Lakes State Forest will be covered by the plan for the East Central area.

There are over 24,000 acres of DNR Division of Forestry-administered forest land in Crow Wing County. The statutory boundary of the Crow Wing State Forest encompasses about 33,700 acres in three blocks in the north-central portion of the county. The Division of Forestry administers 6,309 acres of land within the forest boundary. The Emily State Forest boundary encompasses 640 acres, all of which are administered by the Division of Forestry. There are 16,898 acres of Division of Forestry-administered land outside of designated state forest boundaries scattered throughout the county. The 720 acres of Division of Forestry-administered lands that are part of the Land O' Lakes State Forest are not covered by this plan.

The Crow Wing County Land Department manages nearly 102,000 acres of tax-forfeited forest land in the county. *Minnesota Statutes*, Section 84.777 applies state forest OHV rules to county-administered lands within state forest boundaries unless the county board adopts a resolution that modifies restrictions on the use of OHVs on county-administered lands. An 'Expanded Work Area' encompassing DNR- and County-administered forest lands in and around the Crow Wing and Emily state forests was designated as part of this planning project. The Crow Wing County Board adopted a [resolution](#) on October 25, 2005 that applied the DNR's 'limited' motor vehicle use classification to county-administered lands in the expanded work area. The limited classification means that routes on forest lands are closed to motor vehicle use unless posted

open. Crow Wing County administers lands outside the Expanded Work Area that are not included in this plan.

State- and county-administered forest lands, state forest boundaries, and the expanded work area boundary are depicted on the [location map](#). The motor vehicle use classifications and route designations in this plan apply only to DNR-administered state forest lands (except for part of the Land O' Lake State Forest) and county-administered forest lands within the expanded work area. The motor vehicle use classification does not apply to private lands, to lands within the rights-of-way of public highways, or to county-administered forest lands outside of the expanded work area. The classification also does not apply to state lands administered by DNR Divisions other than the Division of Forestry, such as State Parks and Recreation Areas, Wildlife Management Areas, Scientific & Natural Areas, or State Trails.

4 MOTOR VEHICLE USE CLASSIFICATION

Minnesota law requires the Commissioner of Natural Resources to complete a review of the classification of state forest lands with respect to motor vehicle use by December 31, 2008. The process and criteria for motor vehicle use classification of state forest lands are contained in [Minnesota statutes, laws, and rules](#).

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

Managed Forest Lands. All state forest roads and forest trails are open to recreational motor vehicle use unless posted closed. These forest lands are characterized by a low intensity of use by OHVs, a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities, widely dispersed use, and little competition among visitors for recreational use of the land. Signing and enforcement restrict motor vehicle use in sensitive resource areas and on designated non-motorized recreational trails. ATVs may be operated on non-designated routes and off trail under the hunting and trapping exceptions. ORVs and HLVs may be operated on non-designated routes under the hunting and trapping exceptions. When using motor vehicles on unsigned routes it is illegal to operate the vehicle in a manner that causes erosion or rutting or injures, damages, or destroys trees or growing crops. The *managed* classification can only be applied to state forest lands north of US Highway 2.

Limited Forest Lands. State forest roads are open to motor vehicle use unless posted closed. Forest trails are closed to motor vehicle use, except where designated and signed to permit specific motorized uses. These forest lands are characterized by moderate to high levels of motorized and non-motorized recreational use. It is necessary to designate OHV trails so that OHV use occurs only in suitable and sustainable locations. ATVs may be operated on non-designated routes and off trail under the hunting and trapping exceptions. ORVs and HLVs may be operated on non-designated routes under the hunting and trapping exceptions.

Closed Forest Lands. State 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 motor vehicles 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 Existing Motor Vehicle Use Classification

Motor vehicle use has generally been allowed in most state forests. As the number of 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 agency began to reassess its OHV management programs. The DNR proposed classifying state forests as *managed*, *limited*, or *closed* with respect to motor vehicle use. In May 1998 a series of public open houses were held to discuss the proposed classifications of state forests for motor vehicle use. On September 3, 1998 the Commissioner of Natural Resources issued a memorandum establishing interim classifications for all state forests. The interim classifications became permanent on January 1, 2000. The classification for all DNR - Division of Forestry Lands administered state forest land in Crow Wing County when this planning effort began was *managed*.

4.2 New Motor Vehicle Use Classifications

DNR - Division of Forestry administered lands in Crow Wing County must be reclassified as *limited* or *closed* to comply with current Minnesota law. State forest lands within the statutory boundaries of the Crow Wing and Emily state forests will be classified as *limited*. Parcels of DNR - Division of Forestry administered lands outside of state forest boundaries will be classified as either *limited* or *closed* based on resource conditions. Most of the state forest acreage located outside of state forest boundaries will be classified as *limited*. Nine parcels totaling 877 acres of state forest land will be classified as *closed*. The new motor vehicle use classifications are shown on the attached [map](#).

Crow Wing County proposes to classify most of their lands in the expanded work area as *limited*. The Scrub Oak Area and the Milford Mine Memorial Park are county non-motorized areas. The county is not classifying their lands outside of the expanded work area at this time.

5 FOREST ROUTE INVENTORY

In preparation for this road and trail designation process, the Crow Wing project team compiled available information on the existing roads, trails, and routes that show evidence of continuing human use on state and county 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 obtained from DNR databases. 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 routes on state- and county-administered forest lands that show evidence of ongoing human use. Field crews inventoried most of the 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 inventoried route 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.

DNR staff compiled all the highway, forest road, trail, and route data into a GIS 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 forest route inventory data and to remove obvious duplicates.

While reasonable efforts were made to correct the forest route inventory data there are inherent limitations on the completeness and accuracy of the database. 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 routes. Unused trails and routes re-vegetate, beavers flood routes, and what is a passable route in a dry year may be impassable in wet years.

The inventory identified about 451 miles of routes on state and county forest lands in Crow Wing County. About 347 miles are located on county forest lands and 104 miles on state forest lands. Crow Wing County addressed 90 miles of routes on county forest lands in the expanded work area and previously designated GIA ATV trails in Fort Ripley and Roosevelt townships.

6 FOREST ROUTE DESIGNATIONS

All inventoried routes on state forest land will either be designated as state forest roads, recreational trails, or left as non-designated routes. The designation determines what type of motor vehicle use is allowed and how the route will be signed and managed. The designations were developed to work within the framework provided by the new motor vehicle use classifications described above.

The designations were developed using the forest route inventory data, local land managers' knowledge of the routes, and data from other sources such as soils maps, wetland maps, forest inventory, and the Natural Heritage Elements database. A work group consisting of DNR staff and Crow Wing County Land Department staff developed the proposed designations. For routes that had been managed as state forest roads or recreational trails in the past, the presumption was that the previous designation and uses would be continued unless there was a compelling reason to propose changes.

Geographic information system (GIS) tools were used to map and document the proposed road and trail designations. Each inventoried route on State Forest land was coded to indicate which types of motor vehicles (ATVs, OHMs, ORVs, HLVs) the public would be allowed to use on the route. The primary reason for each designation was also recorded. The challenge was to develop designations that comply with existing laws and policies, adequately protect natural resources, and balance competing public desires for the management of, and access to, forest lands.

6.1 Summary of Route Designations

The following table summarizes the designations of the inventoried forest routes. This project addressed 105 miles of routes on state forest lands and 90 miles of routes on county forest lands. The routes that are proposed for each designation are shown on the *Crow Wing County Forest Road and Trail Designation Map* that is associated with this plan.

Route Designation	State Land (miles)		County Land ¹ (miles)		Total (miles)
Forest Roads	24.1		22.2		46.3
System Forest Roads	0.0		0.0		0.0
Minimum Maintenance Forest Roads	24.1		22.2		46.3
Trails	22.7		31.0		53.7
ATV / OHM Trails ²	17.3		24.5		
Hiking Trails	2.7		0.0		
Hunter Walking Trails	2.7		0.0		
Scrub Oak Non-motorized Area	0.0		6.5		
Non-designated Routes	57.8		36.9		94.7
On <i>limited</i> state forest lands (hunting/trapping exceptions apply)	48.7		x		
On <i>closed</i> state forest lands (no hunting/trapping exceptions)	9.1		x		
On county forest lands (hunting/trapping exceptions apply except in Scrub Oak and Milford Mine Non-motorized Areas)	x		36.9		
Total Inventoried Routes	104.6		90.1		194.7

6.2 Forest Roads

Forest roads are routes that are maintained by natural 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

¹ Only includes Crow Wing County administered lands in the Expanded Work Area around Crow Wing and Emily state forests and county lands in Fort Ripley and Roosevelt townships (existing GIA ATV trails). Does not include the majority of county administered lands.

² Includes the portion of the existing Pine Center and Fort Ripley/Ripley Connection GIA ATV trails located on state or county administered lands.

‘road authorities.’ Each agency sets public use rules and determine the types of vehicles allowed on the forest roads it manages.

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

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

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

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

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

Forest roads maintained by the Crow Wing County Land Department are similar to state forest roads in terms of maintenance levels and public use guidelines.

6.2.1 System Forest Roads

There are no system state forest roads proposed. All designated forest roads will be minimum maintenance forest roads.

6.2.2 Minimum Maintenance Forest Roads

There were 11.2 miles of designated state forest roads when this project started. Some of these state forest roads had been transferred to public highway authorities (townships, cities) but had not been removed from the inventory. Other previously designated forest roads will be

redesignated as hunter walking trails or ATV/OHM trails. Some previously non-designated routes will be added to the forest road inventory.

There will be 24.1 miles of minimum maintenance state forest roads on state forest land. Crow Wing County proposes to manage 22.2 miles of routes on county land as minimum maintenance forest roads.

6.3 Recreational Trails

Some routes on state and county administered forest lands will be designated, signed, and managed for specific recreational uses. When a route is designated as a recreational trail, various uses or activities can be *primary* uses, *permitted* uses, or *prohibited* uses. Primary uses are the uses for which the trail is designed, maintained, and promoted. Primary uses are often included in the trail name, e.g. Veterans Hiking Trail or Pine Center ATV Trail. Permitted uses are uses that are allowed on the trail and do not significantly detract from the primary uses. Hiking would be considered a permitted use on trails that have horseback riding or ATV use as the primary designated uses. Permitted users should yield to primary users of a trail. Prohibited uses are uses that are unsafe or significantly detract from the primary uses of a trail. Motorized uses are typically prohibited on trails designated for non-motorized uses.

This project did not address snowmobile trail designation. Existing snowmobile trail designations are not changed by this plan. Route designations proposed in this plan are compatible with existing snowmobile trail designations.

6.3.1 Non-motorized Trails

There will be 5.4 miles of non-motorized trail on state forest land and 6.5 miles of trail on county land for non-motorized uses. All public motor vehicle use of these routes will be prohibited. These routes will **not** be open to motor vehicle use for hunting- and trapping-related uses typically allowed by MN Statutes 84.926 on state forest lands classified as *managed* or *limited*. The non-motorized trails are shown on the *Forest Road and Trail Designation Map*.

Chirella Hiking Trail – is a one-mile long trail on state land located north of County Highway 11 and south of Lake Ossawinnamakee. The trail is associated with the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway.

Veterans Hiking Trail – is a 1.7-mile long trail located near Upper Hay Lake. It is also associated with the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway.

Hunter Walking Trails – Three hunter walking trails totaling 2.7 miles in length will be designated. The first is 0.8 miles long and is located on state forest land south of MN Highway 210 and north of the Loerch WMA. A portion of this hunter walking trail was previously designated as the Loerch State Forest Road. A parking area was created near Highway 210 to serve visitors to both the state forest land and the WMA. The portion of the former forest road beyond the parking area will be undesignated as a forest road and designated as a hunter walking trail. The second hunter walking trail is 1.3 miles long and is located on state forest land south of MN Highway 18 about 10 miles east of Brainerd. Most of the hunter walking trail is located on the former Nokay State Forest Road which will be undesignated as a forest road and

designated as a hunter walking trail. The third hunter walking trail is the portion of a route that crosses state forest land, county forest land and WMA land between MN Highway 18 and Round Lake Road. The portion of the route on state forest land that will be designated as the hunter walking trail is 0.6 miles long. The trail leads to the Round-Rice Bed WMA.

Scrub Oak Trails – are located on county forest land located south of Greer and Pine lakes and north of the Pine River. The 6.5 miles of trails will be managed for non-motorized uses.

One trail previously managed for non-motorized use will be abandoned. The former *Spring Brook Hunter Walking Trail* in Roosevelt Township will no longer be recognized or managed for non-motorized uses. Portions of this former trail will be designated for other uses.

6.3.2 ATV and OHM Trails

There are two existing Grant-In-Aid (GIA) ATV trails in Crow Wing County. Portions of each of these trails are located on county or state forest lands.

Fort Ripley / Ripley Connection ATV Trails – The Ripley Connection ATV Trail is located within the right-of-way of State Highway 371 between Little Falls and Brainerd. The Fort Ripley ATV Trail is a loop trail system in extreme southwestern Crow Wing County located mostly on county forest land.

Pine Center ATV Trail – This GIA ATV trail is located in Roosevelt Township in southeastern Crow Wing County. The trail is located on public highway rights-of-way, private lands, and state and county forest lands. Additional previously non-designated routes on state and county forest lands that are near the existing trail and that have been used by ATVs under the existing *managed* forest classification are proposed as additions to the Pine Center ATV Trail.

Other ATV/OHM Trails – These are existing routes that have been used by motor vehicles under the existing *managed* forest classification. With the change to a *limited* classification only designated and signed forest roads and trails will be open to recreational ATV and OHM riding. These routes can sustain existing levels of use by ATVs and OHMs but are not suitable for use by HLVs or ORVs (too narrow or soils not suited to use by heavier vehicles). Local riders have typically used these routes. These trails are not long enough or located in areas that are likely to attract significant numbers of ATV or OHM riders seeking ‘destination’ recreational trails. These trails will be open to OHMs and class 1 and 2 ATVs. HLVs and ORVs will be prohibited on these trails. These trails will **not** be available to HLVs and ORVs for hunting- and trapping-related uses typically allowed by MN Statutes 84.926 on state forest lands classified as *managed* or *limited*. These ATV/OHM trails are located near Greer Lake, south of Blackhoof Lake, and in the Black Bear / Miller / Cole lakes area. Shorter segments are located on scattered state forest tracts throughout the county. The locations of the proposed ATV and OHM trails are shown on the *Forest Road and Trail Designation Map*.

6.3.3 ORV Trails

There are currently no designated ORV trails in Crow Wing County. ORVs and HLVs have used a number of routes on state and county lands as allowed under the existing *managed*

classification. No ORV trails will be designated as a result of this plan. ORVs will be allowed to operate on designated forest roads.

The public review draft of this plan published in April 2007 identified a “Site for Potential ORV Trails” located adjacent to the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area. A policy provision in the 2008 – 2009 budget bill enacted in May 2007 prohibits the DNR from developing trails primarily for ORVs in Cass, Crow Wing, and Hubbard counties without legislative approval (*MN Laws 2007, Chapter 57, Article 1, Section 26*). Given the new law, the proposed evaluation of the site for ORV trail development will not happen. The existing routes on the site will be designated as either minimum maintenance forest roads, ATV/OHM trails, or will be left non-designated as proposed in the public review draft.

6.4 Non-designated Routes

Many the inventoried forest routes will not be designated as either forest roads or recreational trails. These routes will not be actively managed. The uses allowed on non-designated routes depend on the motor vehicle use classification of the forest land. There will be 57.8 miles of non-designated routes on state land and 36.9 miles on county land.

6.4.1 Non-designated Routes on Lands Classified as *Limited*

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

The forest road and trail designations will leave 48.7 miles of routes on state forest lands classified as *limited* non-designated.

6.4.2 Non-designated Routes on Lands Classified as *Closed*

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.

The forest road and trail designations will leave 9.1 miles of routes on state forest lands classified as *closed* non-designated.

6.4.3 Non-designated Routes on County Lands

Most non-designated routes on county forest land will be similar to non-designated routes on *limited* state forest lands in that they will be available for non-motorized use and for use by motor vehicles for hunting and trapping related use. There are 36.9 miles of non-designated routes on county lands.

6.5 Designation Map

The proposed forest road and forest trail designations are depicted on the *Crow Wing County Forest Road and Trail Designation Map*, which is incorporated in this plan by reference. The map is a separate document. A compact disc containing the map in Portable Document Format (PDF) is available on request.

7 IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

7.1 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 state forest lands as proposed in this plan. The Commissioner's Orders will be published in the *State Register*.

7.2 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 this plan prior to the effective date of the classification order.

7.3 Expected Date of Change in Motor Vehicle Use Classification

The anticipated effective date for the classification changes and route designations is December 31, 2008.

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

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