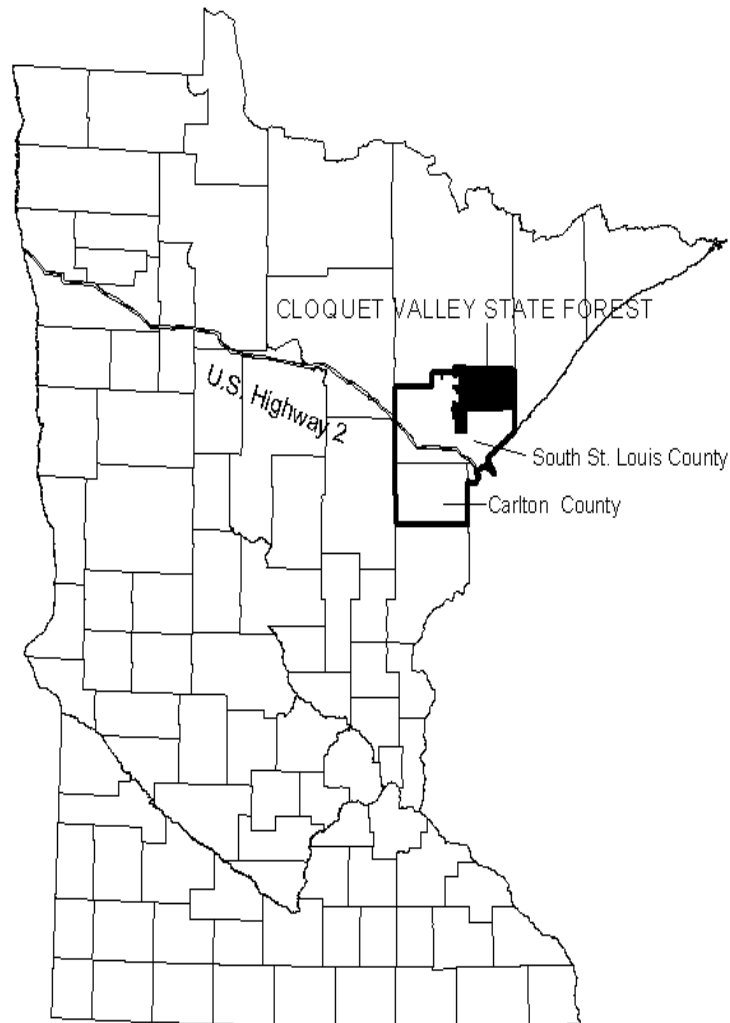


**Forest Classification & Road / Trail Designation Plan
for the Cloquet Valley State Forest &
DNR Forestry-Administered Lands
in Southern St. Louis & Carlton Counties**

**Final Plan
December 10, 2008**



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Cloquet Valley State Forest Planning Team

Daniel Grindy, ChairDNR, Division of Forestry
 Les Miller / Paul Peterson.....DNR, Division of Forestry
 Rich StaffonDNR, Division of Fish & Wildlife (Wildlife)
 Tom Peterson / Bruce Highland..... DNR Division of Trails & Waterways
 Kathy Larson / Lt. Chris Johnson.....DNR Division of Enforcement
 Bruce Carlson.....DNR Division of Ecological Resources

 Christian Balzer, GIS Support..... DNR, Division of Fish & Wildlife
 Craig Perrault, GIS Support..... NE Region MIS Coordinator
 Jason Meyer / John Thompson, Land Department..... St. Louis County

Jim Weseloh / Brian McCann, PlannersDNR, Trails & Waterways



© 2008, State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is available to all individuals regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, age, sexual orientation, or disability. Discrimination inquiries should be sent to MN DNR, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4031; or the Equal Opportunity Office, Department of the Interior, Washington, DC 20240.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| Executive Summary..... | 4 |
| Purpose..... | 4 |
| Lands Covered by this Plan..... | 4 |
| Final Motor Vehicle Use Classification..... | 5 |
| <i>Motor Vehicle Restrictions – Closed Areas</i> | 5 |
| Final Road & Trail Designations..... | 5 |
| <i>State Forest Roads</i> | 6 |
| <i>Recreational Trails</i> | 6 |
| <i>Route Closures & Non-designated Routes</i> | 6 |
| Plan Adoption & Implementation | 7 |
| ----- | |
| Background..... | 8 |
| <i>Process</i> | 8 |
| Description of Lands Covered by the Plan..... | 8 |
| Natural Resource Assessment..... | 9 |
| <i>Landforms and Topography</i> | 9 |
| <i>Soils</i> | 9 |
| <i>Native Plant Communities</i> | 9 |
| <i>Rare Species / Natural Heritage Data</i> | 9 |
| <i>Surface Waters</i> | 9 |
| Recreational Assessment..... | 10 |
| Forest Access Route Inventory..... | 10 |
| Motor Vehicle Classification..... | 10 |
| Final Forest Land Classification..... | 11 |
| Motor Vehicle Restrictions – Closed Areas..... | 13 |
| Final Forest Road & Trail Designations..... | 13 |
| <i>Forest Roads</i> | 14 |
| <i>Recreational Trails</i> | 14 |
| Plan Adoption & Implementation | 15 |
| <i>Road & Trail Signing</i> | 15 |
| <i>Plan Effective Date</i> | 15 |

Appendices

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 Part. 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.

Off-Highway Vehicles (or OHVs) include: All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), Off-Highway Motorcycles (OHMs) and Off-Road Vehicles (ORVs – jeeps or trucks). This plan also addresses Highway Licensed Vehicle (HLV) access to Minnesota's state forest lands. Consistent with legislative policy direction, 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 this plan, as adopted by the Commissioner.

Lands Covered by this Plan

Located in SE St. Louis County, the Cloquet Valley State Forest (CVSF) 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 larger Planning Unit forest includes Southern St. Louis and (all of) Carlton Counties. The St. Louis County portion is bounded by the St. Louis County line on the east, west; and south, and by T55N R19-21W, T56N R17-18W (full townships), and T56N R12-16W (partial townships) on the north.

So-called 'scattered' DNR forestry-administered lands located outside the CVSF's statutory boundaries, in Southern St. Louis and (all of) Carlton County, are also addressed in this plan. State forest lands in Northern St. Louis County were addressed in a previous 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 | 1,000.1 |
| Outside State Forest – So. St. Louis Co. | NA | 77,105 | 112.7 |
| Outside State Forest – Carlton Co. | NA | 18,915 | 27.2 |
| Totals | 327,098 | 144,404 | 1,140.0 |

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. They are addressed in this plan.

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

Final 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'*. This plan retains the *'managed'* classification for all state forest lands located within the statutory boundaries of the CVSF, except for 1,920 acres located inside the Superior National Forest boundaries which will be classified as *'limited'*. Scattered lands outside the forest that lie north of U.S. Hwy 2 in St. Louis County will be classified as *'managed'*, while scattered state lands south of U.S Hwy 2 in So. St. Louis and Carlton Counties will be reclassified as *'limited'*. [See Table 2 for a breakdown by forest classification]

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

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

| Final Forest Classification | Inside State Forest (acres) | Outside SF So. St. Louis Co. (acres) | Outside SF Carlton Co. (acres) | Totals (acres) |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Managed | 44,637 | 72,666 | 0 | 117,273 (81%) |
| Limited | 1,920 | 4,439 | 18,915 | 25,274 (18%) |
| Closed | 1,827 | 0 | 0 | 1,827 (1.0%) |
| 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 state forest lands for motor vehicle use. Public comments also aided in final classification.

Motor Vehicle Restrictions – Closed Areas

Originally, five areas in the Cloquet Valley State forest totaling 16,416 (gross) acres were proposed for motor use limitations pursuant to *MS Chap. 84.926, Subd. 5*. Land ownership within these sites is mixed state and county forest land. Upon reflection, Team Members sought to strengthen protections for these same areas by re-classifying them areas as *'closed'* as regards motor vehicle use. This will restrict OHV use year-round, which is what the team originally intended. St. Louis County Land Department representatives were supportive of this change.

In response to public comments, the team added a sixth site – the Ruth Lake Site to the list of *'closed'* areas. This 2,754 acre site, a popular hunting area comprised of 100% county lands, encompasses two smaller sites previously considered for motor-use limitations. The new configuration will encompass both, and close the forest access route which bisects them. This addresses the team’s previous concerns regarding vehicular travel through this sensitive area. St. Louis County supports the addition of the Ruth Lake Site to the list of *'closed'* areas inside the Cloquet Valley State Forest. With the addition of the Ruth Lake Site, and various boundary refinements, the new total land area encompassed by all six *'closed'* areas is approximately 18,701 acres of mixed state (10%) and county (90%) forest lands.

Final Forest Road & Trail Designations

The planning team evaluated all inventoried 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, those routes not designated as either forest roads or recreational trails will remain open to vehicular use, subject to prohibitions on rutting, erosion and damage to crops or 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 concerns. 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 Final Plan designates 20.3 miles of DNR System Forest Roads inside the CVSF, and 4.9 miles of SFR on scattered lands outside of State Forest boundaries in So. St. Louis and Carlton Counties. About 21 miles of state forest roads inside the Cloquet Valley State Forest, and about 1.0 mile outside the forest, will be undesignated and permanently removed from the state's forest road inventory upon plan implementation.

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 Final Plan designates 55.2 miles of MMRs inside the CVSF, and 8.8 miles on scattered state lands outside of State Forest boundaries in So. St. Louis and Carlton Counties.

Recreational Trail Designations

Non-Motorized Trails. The Final Plan designates 4.5 miles of hunter walking trails inside the CVSF, and another 5.4 miles of trail on scattered state lands outside the forest. About 0.6 miles of the Mother Bear Ski Trail System (located on state lands) was also officially designated. In addition, non-motorized trail users (*e.g., hikers, horseback riders, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, mountain bikers*) may use most roads, trails, and non-designated forest routes.

OHV Trails. There are no OHV trail designations planned for inside the Cloquet Valley State Forest by either DNR or St. Louis County. About 2.9 miles of shared ATV/OHM trail will be designated on scattered state lands in So. St. Louis County, and another 4.3 miles will be designated on scattered lands in Carlton County for a total of 7.2 miles.

Snowmobile. There are no planned changes to DNR Unit Trails or to the existing grant-in-aid snowmobile trail system in the planning unit. Snowmobile use will be unaffected by motor vehicle use classification changes.

Proactive Route Closures The Plan closes a total of 82.3 miles of unsustainable routes on state lands to all vehicular use. About half of this mileage (37.6 mi.) is inside the CVSF, and most of the remainder (44.7 mi.) is located on scattered state lands in southern St. Louis and Carlton Counties. These routes will be gated, bermed and revegetated. St. Louis County intends to close another 150 miles of inventoried routes to all vehicle traffic.

Non-designated Routes. The Final Plan leaves a total of 20.8 miles of routes as '*non-designated*' in '*limited*' areas both inside and outside the CVSF. These routes will not be maintained for 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 summer season vehicular use, but are available pursuant to the seasonal hunter/trapper exceptions under *MS Chapter 84.926*.

**Table 3. Final State Forest Road and Trail Designation Summary
for Southern St. Louis & Carlton Counties, 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) | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Total Inventoried Routes | 185.3 | | 112.7 | | 27.2 | |
| System Forest Road | 20.3 | | 3.1 | | 1.8 | |
| Min. Maint. Forest Road | 55.2 | | 5.7 | | 3.1 | |
| Non-designated Routes | 104.7 | | 100.0 | | 13.6 | |
| Proactive Closures | 37.6 | | 41.7 | | 3.0 | |
| In <i>closed</i> forests | 0.0 | | | | | |
| In <i>limited</i> forests | 3.5 | | 6.7 | | 10.6 | |
| In <i>managed</i> forests | 63.6 | | 51.6 | | 0.0 | |
| ATV/OHM Trail | 0.0 | | 2.9 | | 4.3 | |
| Snowmobile Trail | 0.0 | | 0.0 | | 0.0 | |
| Hunter Walking Trails | 4.5 | | 1.0 | | 4.4 | |
| Ski Trails | 0.6 | | 0.0 | | 0.0 | |

Plan Adoption & Implementation

A public notice of plan adoption will be published in the *State Register* and a statewide DNR news release will be issued announcing plan completion. All final plans, maps, public response and decision documents, and final Commissioner's Orders will also be posted at www.mndnr.gov.

Road & Trail Signing

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 effective date for the classification of the Cloquet Valley State Forest, and for the designation of all roads and trails is December 31, 2009. This date is listed on the final signed Commissioner's Orders as published in the *State Register*. Plan implementation should be substantially completed by this date.

Forest Classification & Road/Trail Designation Plan

Cloquet Valley State Forest

Background

Legislation enacted in 2003, and amended in 2005 and 2007, 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 intends to designate for various motorized and non-motorized uses on state-administered lands within the Cloquet Valley State Forest.

Process

In January 2005, 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 the appropriate forest land classification(s), as per motor vehicle use. (current classification is '*managed*')
3. Evaluate existing forest access routes using the Rapid Environmental Assessment Checklist. Determine which of these routes is capable of sustaining continued motorized use; which aren't suited to motor use; and which might be better suited to a non-motorized use designation.
4. Present the team's recommendations for road and trail use designations and forest reclassification for public review and comment. Incorporate public comment into a final plan for DNR review and approval.

Description of Lands Covered by the Plan

Located in SE St. Louis County, the Cloquet Valley State Forest (CVSF) 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 larger Planning Unit forest includes Southern St. Louis and (all of) Carlton Counties. The St. Louis County portion is bounded by the St. Louis County line on the east, west; and south, and by T55N R19-21W, T56N R17-18W (full townships), and T56N R12-16W (partial townships) on the north.

So-called 'scattered' DNR forestry-administered lands located outside the CVSF's statutory boundaries, in Southern St. Louis and (all of) Carlton County, are also addressed in this plan. State forest lands in Northern St. Louis County were addressed in a previous 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 4.

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 classified similarly to state forest lands (i.e., '*managed*'; routes 'open' unless posted 'closed', 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.

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 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Cloquet Valley State Forest | 327,098 | 48,384 | 1,000.1 |
| Outside State Forest – So. St. Louis Co. | NA | 77,105 | 112.7 |
| Outside State Forest – Carlton Co. | NA | 18,915 | 27.2 |
| Totals | 327,098 | 144,404 | 1,140.0 |

Natural Resources Assessment

Landforms and Topography

The Ecological Classification System (ECS) helps describe, map and manage ecosystems at various scales using climatic, geologic, topographic, hydrologic, soils and vegetation data. The Cloquet Valley State Forest (CVSF) is located 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 depressions on upland flats. These 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 listed 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 inside 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 recently adopted 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). USFS does not permit ATV use for big-game hunting or retrieval on National Forest System lands.

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 167.9 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 112.7 miles of existing routes on state lands, and the inventory for Carlton County showed 27.2 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 from the DNR and is incorporated into this plan by reference. Note that original data totals were refined through this process by adding missing segments, deleting non-state segments, and correcting route alignments. Data totals have also changed as a result.

Motor Vehicle Use Classification

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

Managed Forest Lands. Forest roads and forest trails are ‘open’ to motor vehicle use unless posted ‘closed’. These forest lands are characterized by widely dispersed, low intensity recreational use, a mix of motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities, and little competition among visitors for recreational use of the land. Signing and enforcement are needed to 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 ‘open’. These forests are characterized by moderate to high

levels of both 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., SNA's, WMA's, BWCW) are classified as 'closed.'

Final 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'. This plan retains the 'managed' classification for all state forest lands located within the statutory boundaries of the CVSF, except for 1,920 acres located inside the Superior National Forest boundaries which will be classified as 'limited'. Scattered lands outside the forest that lie north of U.S. Hwy 2 in St. Louis County will be classified as 'managed', while scattered state lands south of U.S Hwy 2 in So. St. Louis and Carlton Counties will be reclassified as 'limited'. [See Table 5] This management approach mirrors that of the St. Louis County Land Department, which manages nearly 900,000 acres in the county; 231,517 acres of which are located inside the CVSF.

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

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

| Final Forest Classification | Inside State Forest (acres) | Outside SF So. St. Louis Co. (acres) | Outside SF Carlton Co. (acres) | Totals (acres) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Managed | 46,464 | 72,666 | 0 | 119,100 (82%) |
| Limited | 1,920 | 4,439 | 18,915 | 25,274 (18%) |
| Totals | 48,384 | 77,105 | 18,915 | 144,404 |

Forest Classification judgments were based upon analysis of the eight criteria of MR 6100.1950, Subp. 1-4 which guide the classification of forest lands for motor vehicle use. The DNR'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) 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 forest. Many Colonial Waterbird Nesting Areas, 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 critical. The *'managed'* classification mirrors that of the St. Louis County Land Department, making vehicle use regulations more understandable and enforceable across both 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 also important to assure continued year-round vehicle access to these cabin lease sites. Both of these objectives can be met under a *'managed'* forest classification.

B. Resource Impact by Motorized and Non-Motorized Use

All recreational trails, motorized or non-motorized, can impact natural resources during their construction, maintenance or 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 also fragment certain habitat types. In sum, the type and extent of impacts vary by activity, by species and by season.

The DNR has concluded that the majority of existing inventoried routes in the CVSF can sustain continued vehicular use. Those that cannot will be closed or designated for non-motorized uses only. Future resource impacts can and will 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 designations in this plan. Continued access, for a mix of outdoor recreational activities, was a key factor in the DNR's decision to retain the *'managed'* classification for the forest.

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

Under this plan, there will be little or no change in designated trails, roads, or parking areas. Additional signs will be required at parking areas, along forest roads, and along the perimeter of *'closed'* areas. The signs will inform users of vehicular use limitations and regulations. Snowmobiles and non-motorized trail users will be largely unaffected by forest classification. Off-highway vehicle riders, on the other hand, will experience route closures, and larger areal closures within the forest. See Appendix C for a description of special *'closed'* areas inside the forest.

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 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, is illegal and will remain so under this plan.

In the report: “2004 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey of Minnesotans” [MN DNR, 2005] projects a substantial increase in ATV use over the period of 2004-2014. According to this study, while other outdoor activities are expected to remain stable or experience participation declines, ATV riding will increase sharply 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 anticipated in coming years. A ‘managed’ classification allows for future 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 (per MN DNR, 2005). 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. Six areas totaling nearly 19,000 acres will be reclassified as ‘closed’ to vehicular use under this plan. Another 17.8 miles of hunter walking trail will be created; 23.5 miles inside the CVSF, and 5.4 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, non-motorized hunting experience.

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. The department did make every effort to reduce existing problems and avoid future conflict through this forest classification and access plan. . This pursuit of recreational balance was, in large part, the impetus for reclassifying six areas (totaling nearly 19,000 acres) for non-motorized use only.

H. Public Safety and Law Enforcement Concerns

This plan is an important first step towards attaining ‘managed use of managed trails’. It implements a series of actions, intended to better control motorized access within the forest. By concentrating motorized use on fewer, more sustainable routes, and by establishing several ‘closed’ areas within the forest, the DNR 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, and that user compliance remains at acceptable levels.

Motor Vehicle Use Restrictions – Closed Areas

Originally, five areas in the Cloquet Valley State forest totaling 16,416 (gross) acres were proposed for motor use limitations pursuant to *MS Chap. 84.926, Subd. 5*. Land ownership within these sites is mixed state and (majority) county forest land. Upon reflection, Team Members sought to strengthen protections for these same areas by re-classifying them areas as ‘closed’ as regards motor vehicle use. This will restrict OHV use year-round, which is what the team originally intended. St. Louis County is supportive of this change.

Additionally, in response to public comments, the department added a sixth site – the Ruth Lake Site to the list of ‘closed’ areas. This 2,754 acre site, a popular hunting area comprised of 100% county lands, encompasses two smaller sites previously considered for motor-use limitations. The new configuration encompasses both, and closes the forest access route that bisects them. This addresses concerns regarding vehicular travel through this sensitive area. With the addition of the Ruth Lake Area, and various boundary refinements, the new total land area for all six ‘closed’ areas is approximately 18,701 acres of mixed state and county forest lands. St. Louis County supports closure of the Ruth Lake Site.

Final Forest Road & Trail Designations

The planning team evaluated all inventoried routes and recommended that these either be designated as a road or trail, be closed to future use, or that the route remain ‘non-designated’. For existing designated roads and trails, the presumption was that scurrent designation and uses would be maintained, unless a compelling reason exists 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 statutory prohibitions on rutting, erosion and damage to living vegetation. The development of unauthorized permanent trails on state lands is also prohibited.

State Forest Roads

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 public roads. They are principally intended to serve state forest management and protection needs, and in most cases, they do not provide legal access to private property.

The Final Plan designates 20.3 miles of System Forest Roads inside the CVSF, and 4.9 miles of SFR on scattered lands outside of state forest boundaries. About 21 miles of state forest roads inside the Cloquet Valley State Forest, and about 1.0 mile outside the forest, will be undesignated and permanently removed from the state's forest road inventory upon plan implementation.

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 Final Plan designates 55.2 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 Final Plan designates 4.5 miles of hunter walking trails inside the CVSF, and another 5.4 miles of trail on scattered state lands outside the forest. About 0.6 miles of the Mother Bear Ski Trail System (located on state lands) was also officially designated. In addition, non-motorized trail users (*e.g., hikers, horseback riders, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, mountain bikers*) may use most roads, trails, and 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. Snowmobile use will be unaffected by the implementation of this plan.

OHV Trails. There are no OHV trail designations inside the Cloquet Valley State Forest. About 2.9 miles of shared ATV/OHM trail designations are planned for scattered state lands in So. St. Louis County, and 4.3 miles are planned for scattered lands in Carlton County for a total of 7.2 miles. Interest in pursuing future grant-in-aid OHV trail projects remains high among area ATV clubs. The DNR welcomes trail proposals from area clubs and their sponsors.

Non-designated Routes. The plan leaves a total of 20.8 miles of routes on state lands as '*non-designated*'. These are located mostly in '*limited*' areas south of US Hwy 2 in Southern St. Louis and Carlton Counties. These routes will not be maintained for 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 of *MS 84.926 Subp. 2 & 4*.

Proactive Route Closures The Plan closes a total of 82.3 miles of unsustainable routes on state lands to all vehicular use. About half of this mileage (37.6 mi.) is inside the CVSF, and most of the remainder (44.7 mi.) is located on scattered state lands in southern St. Louis and Carlton Counties. These routes will be gated, bermed and revegetated. St. Louis County intends to close another 150 miles of inventoried routes to all vehicle traffic.

**Table 6. Final 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) | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Total Inventoried Routes | 185.3 | | 112.7 | | 27.2 | |
| System Forest Road | 20.3 | | 3.1 | | 1.8 | |
| Min. Maint. Forest Road | 55.2 | | 5.7 | | 3.1 | |
| Non-designated Routes | 104.7 | | 100.0 | | 13.6 | |
| Proactive Closures | 37.6 | | 41.7 | | 3.0 | |
| In closed forests | 0.0 | | | | | |
| In limited forests | 3.5 | | 6.7 | | 10.6 | |
| In managed forests | 63.6 | | 51.6 | | 0.0 | |
| ATV/OHM Trail | 0.0 | | 2.9 | | 4.3 | |
| Snowmobile Trail | 0.0 | | 0.0 | | 0.0 | |
| Hunter Walking Trails | 4.5 | | 1.0 | | 4.4 | |
| Ski Trails | 0.6 | | 0.0 | | 0.0 | |

Plan Adoption & Implementation

A public notice of plan adoption will be published in the *State Register* and a statewide DNR news release will be issued announcing plan completion. All final plans, maps, public response and decision documents, and final Commissioner's Orders will also be posted at www.mndnr.gov.

Road & Trail Signing

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 effective date for the classification of the Cloquet Valley State Forest, and for the designation of roads and trails is December 31, 2009. This date is listed on the final signed Commissioner's Orders which will be published in the *State Register*. Plan implementation should be substantially completed by this date.

FinalPlan.Doc
10 Dec. 2008

APPENDIX A

Minnesota Statutes & Rules Related to State Forest Classification & Off-Highway Vehicle Operations

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, and by ML 2007, Ch. 57, Sec. 155.

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 the status of the lands within each forest to limited or closed. The commissioner may classify portions of a limited forest as closed. The commissioner must also 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, subdivision 1, 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.

History: 2003 c 128 art 1 s 21(as amended)

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.

Chapter 84.773, Minnesota Statutes 2006

84.773 RESTRICTIONS ON OPERATION.

Subdivision 1. Restrictions. A person may not intentionally operate an off-highway vehicle: (1) on a trail on public land that is designated or signed for nonmotorized use only; (2) on restricted areas within public lands that are posted or where gates or other clearly visible structures are placed to prevent unauthorized motorized vehicle access; (3) except as specifically authorized by law or rule adopted by the commissioner, in unfrozen public waters, as defined in section [103G.005](#); in a state park; in a scientific and natural area; or in a wildlife management area; or (4) in a calcareous fen, as identified by the commissioner.

Subd. 2. Wetland disturbance. A person may not operate an off-highway vehicle in a manner to: (1) indicate a willful, wanton, or reckless disregard for the safety of persons or property; (2) carelessly upset the natural and ecological balance of a wetland or public waters wetland; or (3) impact a wetland or public waters wetland in excess of the amounts authorized in section [103G.2241, subdivision 9](#), unless: (i) sequencing of the impact is followed according to section [103G.222, subdivision 1](#), paragraph (b), and the impact is repaired under section [103G.2242](#), and rules adopted pursuant to that section; or (ii) the activity is exempt under section [103G.2241](#).

Subd. 3. Private land access. The commissioner may grant up to a ten-year permit to exempt a private landowner or leaseholder from this section when the only reasonable access to a permit applicant's land is across state land.

History: 2003 c 128 art 1 s 19; 2004 c 255 s 6

Chapter 84.777, Minnesota Statutes 2007

84.777 OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE USE OF STATE LANDS RESTRICTED.

Subd. 1. Designated trails. (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.

Subd. 2. Off-highway vehicle seasons. (a) The commissioner shall prescribe seasons for off-highway vehicle use on state forest lands. Except for designated forest roads, a person must not operate an off-highway vehicle on state forest lands outside of the seasons prescribed under this paragraph. (b) The commissioner may designate and post winter trails on state forest lands for use by off-highway vehicles. (c) For the purposes of this subdivision, "state forest lands" means forest lands under the authority of the commissioner as defined in section 89.001, subdivision 13, and lands managed by the commissioner under section 282.011.

Subd. 3. Mapped trails. (a) Except as provided in sections 84.926 and 84.928, after completion of official department off-highway vehicle maps for the area, a person must not operate an off-highway vehicle on state land that is not mapped for the type of off-highway vehicle. This paragraph does not apply to state forest land north of U.S. Highway 2 until after June 30, 2009. (b) This subdivision does not apply to a forest access route in a managed forest north of U.S. Highway 2 that the commissioner has not designated as a road or trail. Forest access routes will not be signed or maintained and will not be included on published user maps of the forest. Off-highway vehicle operation on forest access routes is subject to the prohibitions on causing erosion, rutting, damage to trees or crops, and construction of unauthorized trails contained in Minnesota Rules. Damaged routes are subject to closure to off-highway vehicle use.

Subd. 4. Exemption from rulemaking. Determinations of the commissioner under this section may be by written order published in the State Register and are exempt from the rulemaking provisions of chapter 14. Section 14.386 does not apply.

History: 2003 c 128 art 1 s 21

[MS 84.8045] Restrictions on Off-Road Vehicle Trails

Notwithstanding any provision of sections 84.797 to 84.805 or other law to the contrary, the commissioner shall not permit land administered by the commissioner in Cass, Crow Wing, and Hubbard Counties to be used or developed for trails primarily for off-road vehicles as defined in section 84.797, subdivision 7, except: (1) upon approval by the legislature; or (2) in designated off-road vehicle use areas.

History: Minnesota Session Laws 2007, Ch. 57 Sec. 26.

Chapter 84.926, Minnesota Statutes 2007,

84.926 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, including class 2 all-terrain vehicles](#), 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.

Subd. 6. Operation; class 2 vehicles. Except as provided in subdivision 4, operation of class 2 all-terrain vehicles on lands administered by the commissioner is limited to forest roads, minimum maintenance roads, and trails designated or signed for class 2 all-terrain vehicles.

Subd. 7. Snowmobiles; closed forests; off trail. Forests classified as closed forests are open to off-trail snowmobile use unless prohibited, as determined by the commissioner by written order published in the State Register. The determination is not subject to the rulemaking provisions of chapter 14 and section [14.386](#) does not apply.

History: 1984 c 647 s 5; 1986 c 444; 2003 c 128 art 1 s 31; 1Sp2005 c 1 art 2 s 45; 2006 c 281 art 2 s 6

Minnesota Rules, Part 6100.1950

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. On forest lands classified as managed, a person may operate a motor vehicle only on forest roads and forest trails that are not posted and designated closed and in areas that are posted and designated to allow motor vehicle use, subject to the limitations and exceptions in this part.

B. On forest lands classified as limited, a person may operate a motor vehicle 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.

STAT AUTH: MS 14.045; 14.388; 84.03; 85.052; 85.053; 85.20; 86A.05; 86A.06; 89.031; 89.19 to 89.21; 89.71 HIST: 24 SR 208; 25 SR 782; 27 SR 27

APPENDIX B

Summary Tables – Final Plan

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. Final State Forest Land Classification: So. St. Louis & Carlton County

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

| Final Forest Classification | Inside State Forest (acres) | Outside SF So. St. Louis Co. (acres) | Outside SF Carlton Co. (acres) | Totals (acres) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Managed | 44,637 | 72,666 | 0 | 117,273 (81%) |
| Limited | 1,920 | 4,439 | 18,915 | 25,274 (18%) |
| Closed | 1,827 | 0 | 0 | 1,827 (1.0%) |
| Totals | 48,384 | 77,105 | 18,915 | 144,404 |

Table 3. Summary of Road & Trail Designations on State & County Lands in 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 | 1,157.4 miles |
| Off-Highway Vehicle Trails | 7.2 miles |
| | |
| Non-Motor Trails | 35.7 miles |
| Non-Designated Routes ('limited' forest) | 20.8 miles |
| Proactive Closure | 232.6 miles |
| | |
| System State Forest Roads | 112.5 miles |
| Minimum Maint. State Forest Roads | 268.4 miles |
| Forest Access Routes ('managed' forest) | 480.2 miles |
| Total of All Motorized Routes | 868 miles (75%) |

Table 4. Final DNR 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 | 185.3 miles |
| Off-Highway Vehicle Trails | 0.0 miles |
| Non-Motorized Trails | 5.1 miles |
| Non-Designated Routes ('limited' forest) | 3.5 miles |
| Proactive Closure | 37.6 miles |
| System State Forest Roads | 20.3 miles |
| Minimum Maint. State Forest Roads | 55.2 miles |
| Forest Access Routes ('managed' forest) | 63.6 miles |
| Total of All Motorized Routes | 139.1 miles (or 75%) |

Table 5. Summary of Final 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 | 112.7 miles | 27.2 miles |
| Off-Highway Vehicle Trails | 2.9 miles | 4.3 miles |
| Snowmobile Trails (on state land) | 0.0 miles | 0.0 miles |
| Non-Motor Trails | 1.0 miles | 4.4 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 (56%) | 9.2 miles (34%) |

APPENDIX C

'Closed' Areas

Cloquet Valley State Forest St. Louis County, MN

All state and county lands within the following six areas (all are located within the statutory boundaries of the Cloquet Valley State Forest) will be classified as 'closed' upon this plan's published effective date. **Total (6 Sites) = 18,701.5 Acres.** Three of the six sites include a mix of both state and county tax-forfeited forest lands. The others are comprised solely of lands administered by St. Louis County. The graphics which follow this text are approximations – not suited to navigation.

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

- Size: 1,262.2 acres.
- Ownership: Approx. 50% State, 50% St. Louis County tax-forfeited lands.
- Boundaries: Follow existing trails and forest roads.
- Good perimeter access via existing trails and roads. Traditional hunting area.
- Contains state-designated northern hardwood old-growth; with mature northern hardwood forest. Mix of upland and lowland topography & vegetation types.
- Sensitive silty soils are subject to rutting.
- No St. Louis County cabin leases within the area.
- **Summary:** *Most existing routes will be closed due to high REAC Scores. Opportunities exist to develop first-rate hunter walking trails routes as current timber harvest proceeds.*

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, unnamed tributary to Boulder Lake, and well-established section lines.
- Readily accessible by HLV, but contains no St. Louis County cabin leases.
- Includes an existing St. Louis County (non-motorized) Grouse Management Area.
- North Boulder Lake Road is gated, as is the trail leading into the Grouse Management Area.
- Includes a mix of upland forest and wetland native plant communities. Contains lowland cedar, good deer wintering area. Partially within a *preliminary* MCBS Site of High Biodiversity Significance.
- **Summary:** *This is an established non-motor county management unit with some designated hunter walking trails. The county wishes to officially exclude all OHV use from the unit.*

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

- Size: 999.6 acres
- Ownership: Approx. 75% St. Louis County tax-forfeited forest land, 25% state forest land.
- Boundaries: State Forest boundary, existing trails, Cloquet River, and established ¼ Section lines;
- Predominantly upland with no inventoried motor routes. Perimeter access via the Jolly Rancher Road.
- Contains documented records of wood turtle (State-listed threatened species) and designated old-growth forest (lowland hardwood cedar). MCBS Biodiversity Significance ranked 'high'.
- **Summary:** *Excellent upland hunting site. Vehicular use would jeopardize outstanding natural resource values within this Cloquet River riparian area.*

'Closed' Areas
Cloquet Valley State Forest - St. Louis County, MN
[con't]

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

- Size: 9,455 acres.
- Ownership: Approx. 90% St. Louis County tax-forfeited forest land, about 10% state forest land.
- Boundaries: Existing trails, Little Cloquet River, South Branch Mud Creek, West Branch Knife River, Rossini Road, section lines, and private land ownership boundaries.
- Access from the Hart Lake & Rossini Road, and the Lieuna Lake Road.
- Large, remote area with few inventoried routes. Contains undeveloped lake and river shoreline.
- Contains a mix of upland and seasonally-dry wetland native plant communities.
- Includes the DNR's Lieuna Wildlife Management Area.
- 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 (w/access permit).
- **Summary:** *Remote upland site with good perimeter access will provide a welcome non-motor hunting opportunity proximate to Duluth & Interstate 35.*

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

- Size: 3,414.3 acres;
- Ownership: 100% St. Louis County tax-forfeited forest lands.
- Boundaries: Marshall Trail (forest road), existing trails, Cloquet River, ¼ section lines.
- Good perimeter access off of existing trails, but few interior trails.
- Contains a mix of upland and wetland native plant communities.
- Contains 4 miles of undeveloped Cloquet River shoreline, and documented records of wood turtles (State-listed threatened). MCBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance ranked outstanding and high.
- **Summary:** *Existing routes will be closed due to high REAC Scores. Vehicular use would jeopardize outstanding natural resource values within this essentially unroaded area adjacent to the Cloquet River flowage.*

Site 6. Ruth Lake Site T54N R12W, Portions of Sections 1, 11, 12, 13, 14, 23 & 24

- Size: 2,754.4 acres;
- Ownership: 100% St. Louis County tax-forfeited forest lands.
- Boundaries: Rossini Road (Co. 266) on SW, Drummond Line on NE, Lake Co. Line on East, unnamed flowage on SE, and private & MPL section/quarter-section lines on the west.
- Good perimeter access off of existing roads and trails.
- Predominantly upland, traditional non-motorized hunting area
- Proposed closure of 1.8 mile route connecting two private properties on either side of the site. This route is wet and inaccessible to the public (both ends are currently gated).
- The addition of 4.75 miles of Hunter Walking trails is proposed elsewhere within this site.
- Additional hunter walking trails will be considered for the future as this site is gradually logged.
- **Summary:** *Most existing routes will be closed to vehicles due to high REAC Scores. Few interior walking trails currently, but opportunity exists to develop first-rate hunter walking trails as the current timber harvest operation proceeds.*

Miscellaneous Remarks

- St. Louis County tax-forfeited forest lands comprise the majority of lands enclosed within these proposed 'closed' areas. St. Louis County Land Dept. officials are supportive of this 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. These 'closed' areas will help to 'balance' motor/non-motor recreational opportunities, and reduce visitor conflict by providing non-motor areas for those who wish to use the forest absent motor influences or disturbance.
- All of these areas are proximate to the Duluth Metro-Area, and are readily accessible to Twin Cities residents via I-35. These sites should, therefore provide quality, accessible non-motorized recreation opportunities for a potentially large population of urban Minnesotans.

Cloquet River Buffer

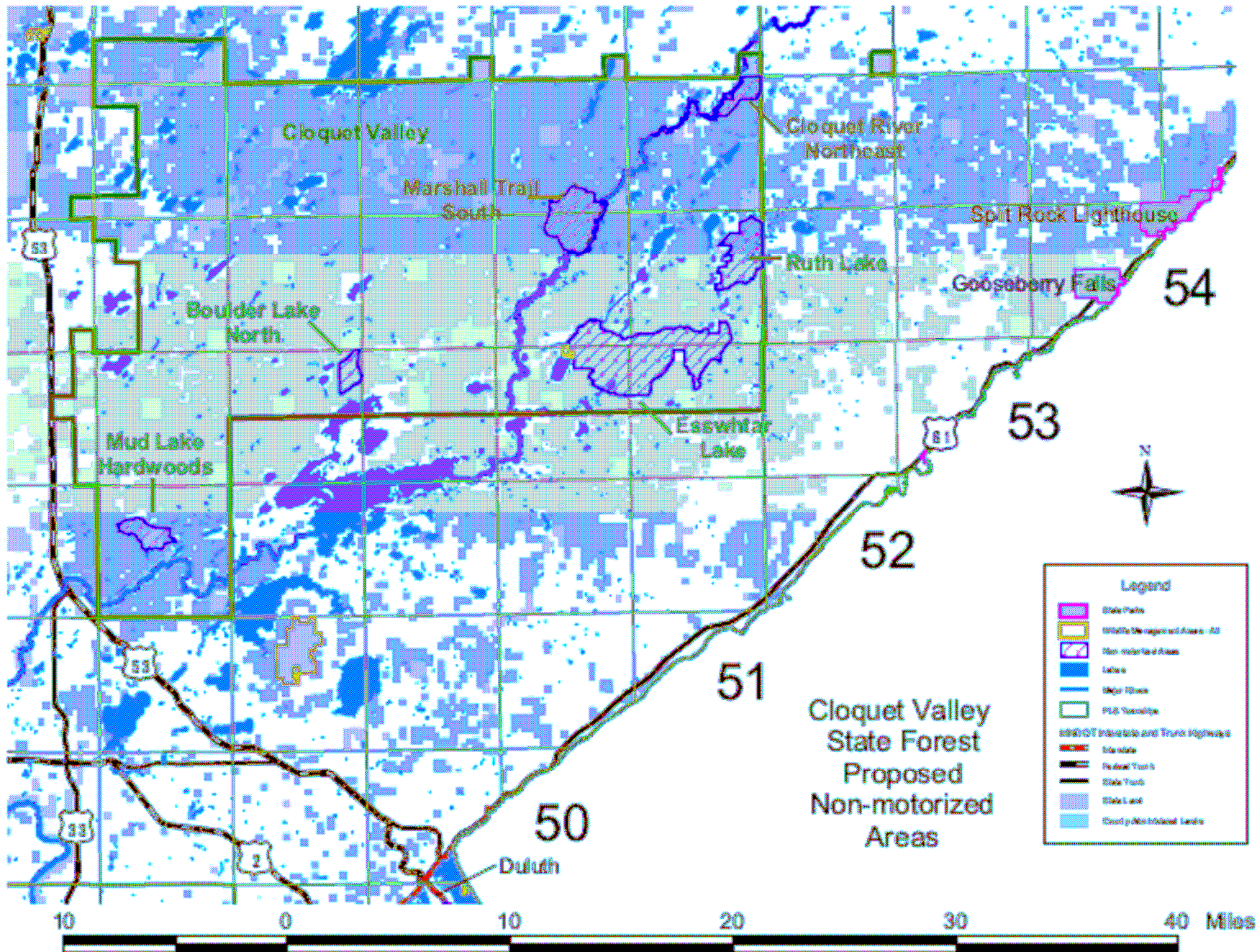
The Cloquet River is a high quality waterway that follows its natural meander and, especially within the CVSF, contains an intact shoreline bordered by native plant communities. It is a State-designated canoe route, a Site of Outstanding Biodiversity Significance (within the CVSF), and provides habitat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

The DNR has developed an interdisciplinary MOU that addresses special management considerations within a ¼ mile of either side of the river. The *Cloquet River Management Plan* also addresses the significance of this waterway to local residents, land owners and land managers. The DNR and St. Louis County Land Department recognize the unique value of the Cloquet River in their respective management decision making.

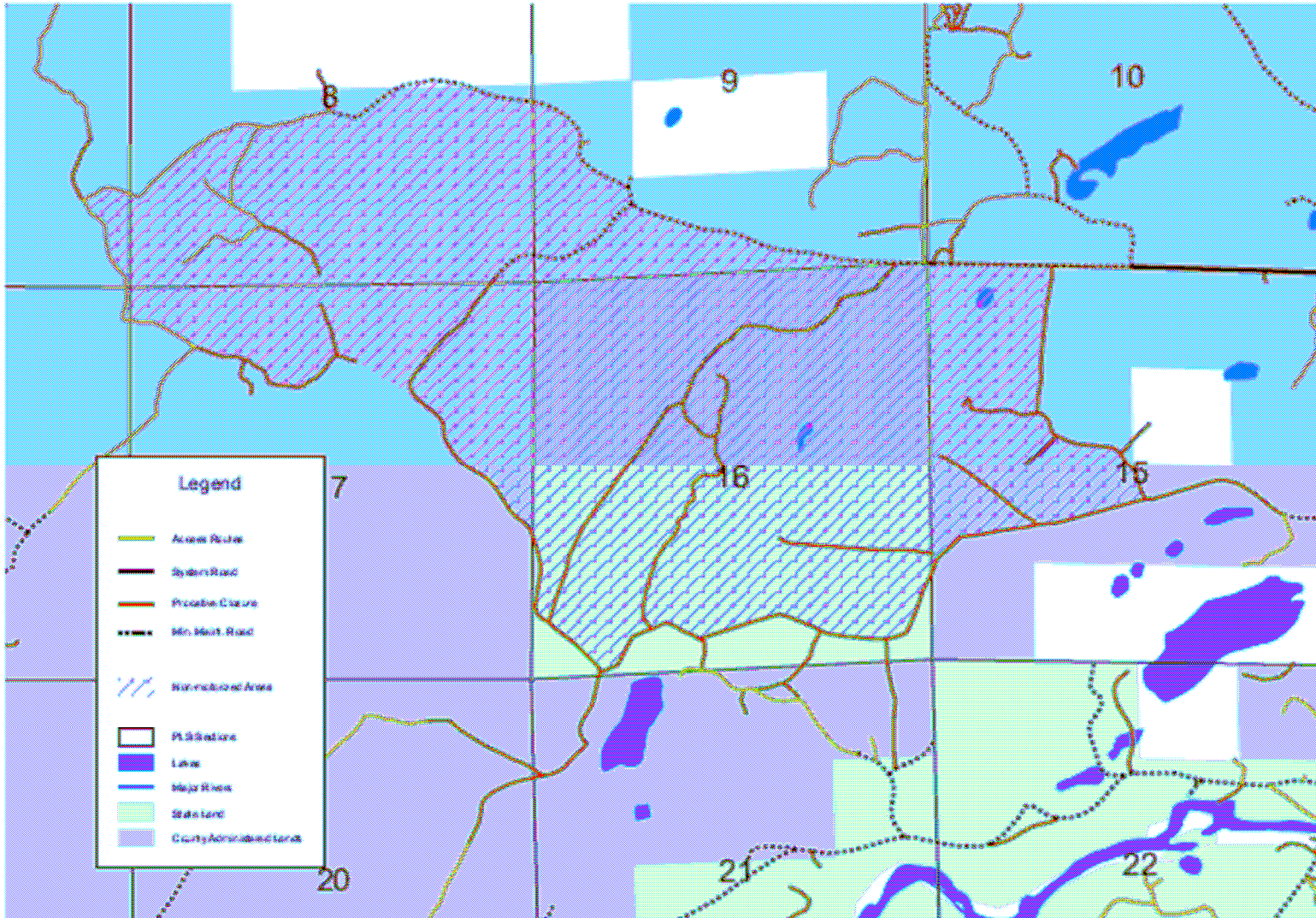
User-developed trails near the river have resulted in serious rutting and subsequent sediment loading into the river in some areas. For this reason, most routes that parallel the river and/or dead-end at the river were closed to motorized traffic. At the same time, public access to the river was maintained and existing forest roads and developed public access sites remain open to vehicle traffic.

NOTICE:

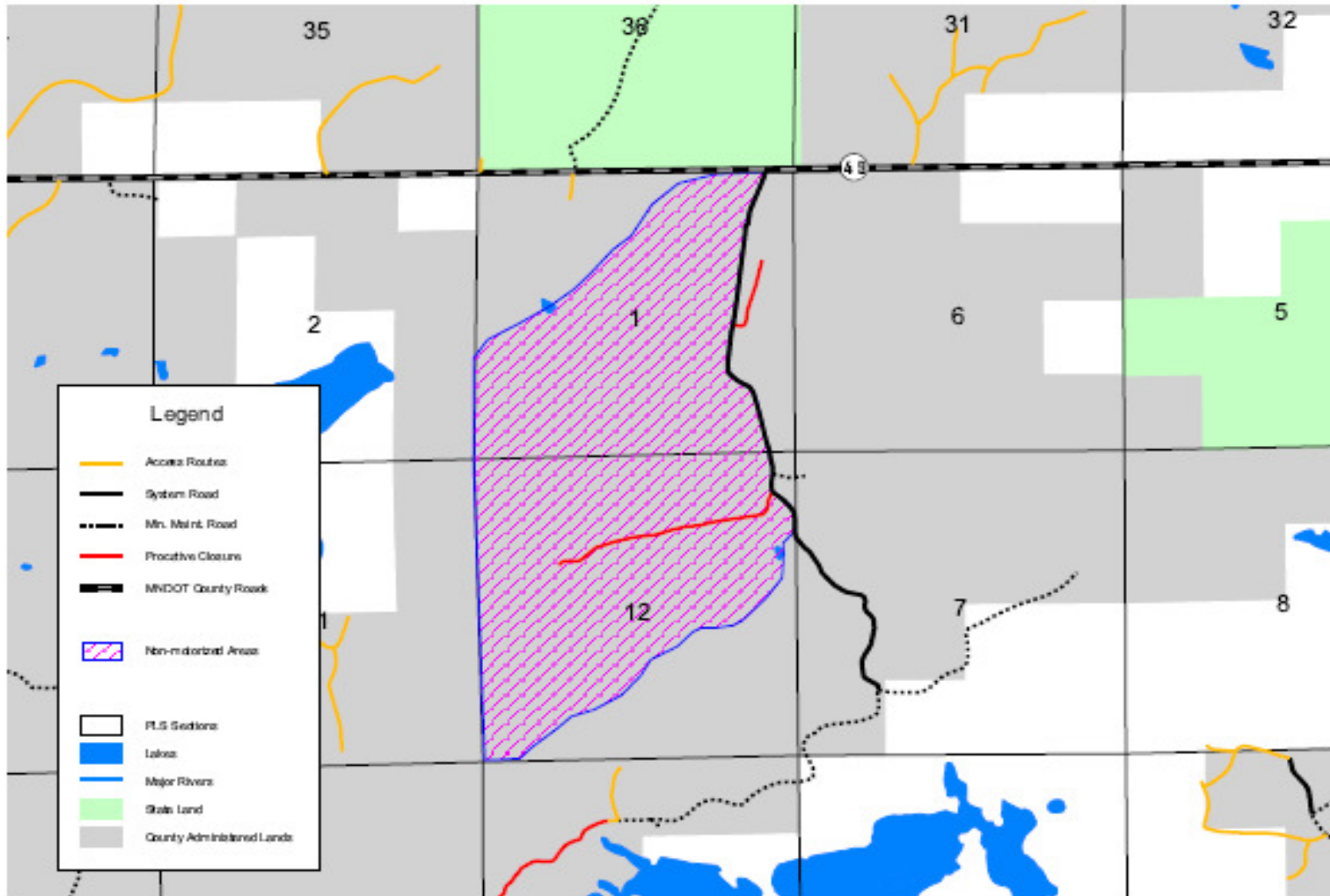
The graphics which follow depict each of the six nested 'closed' classification areas located inside the Cloquet Valley State Forest. These are rough approximations and should not be used for navigation purposes. Legal descriptions of site boundaries are contained in the DNR Commissioner's Forest Classification Order. This order is available for review at www.mndnr.gov or by request from Brian McCann, Trails & Waterways, 651/259-5627 or Toll Free 1-888-MINNDNR (or 646-6367). Aerial photo-maps of each of the sites are also available upon request.



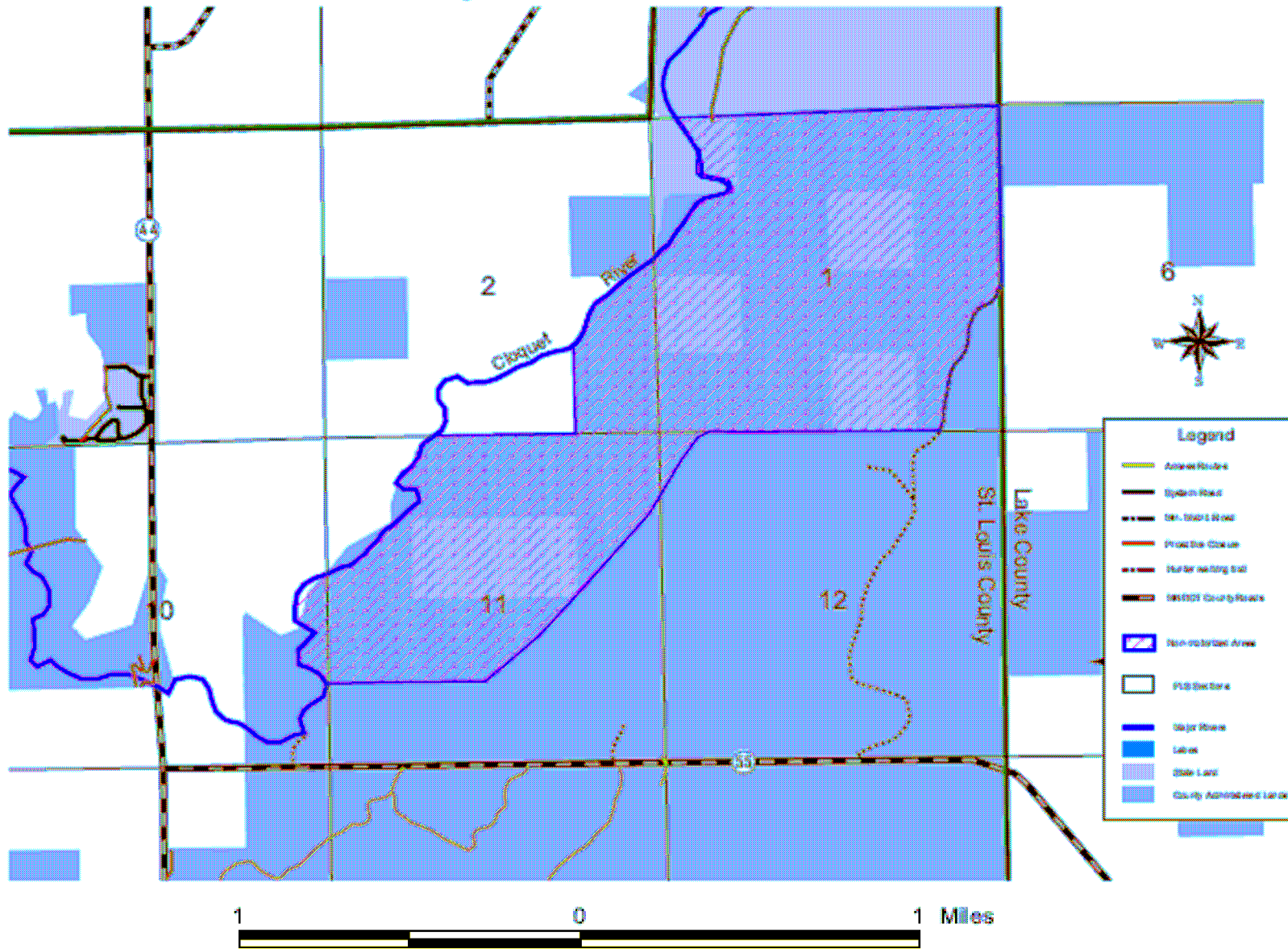
Mud Lake Hardwoods



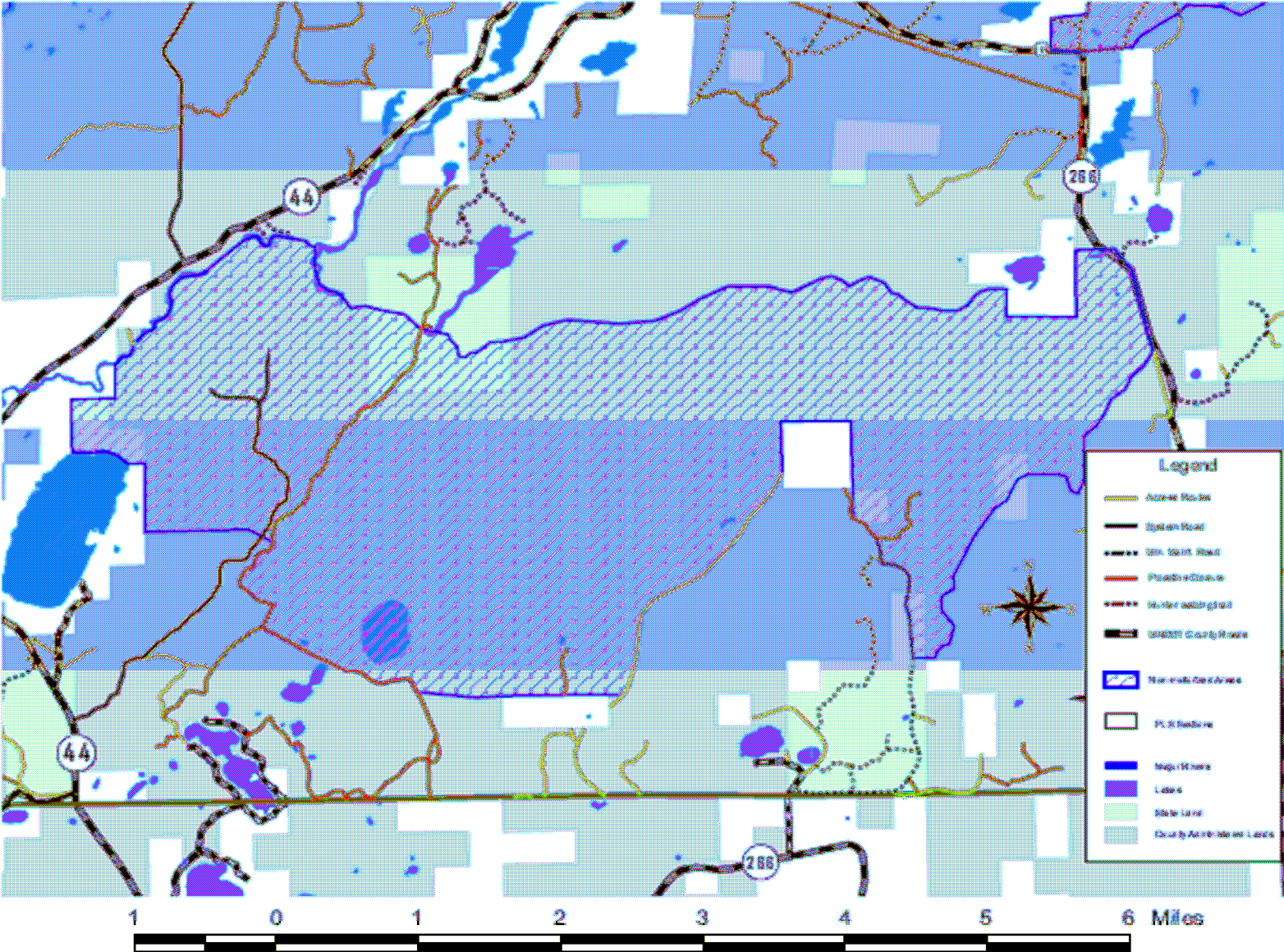
Boulder Lake North



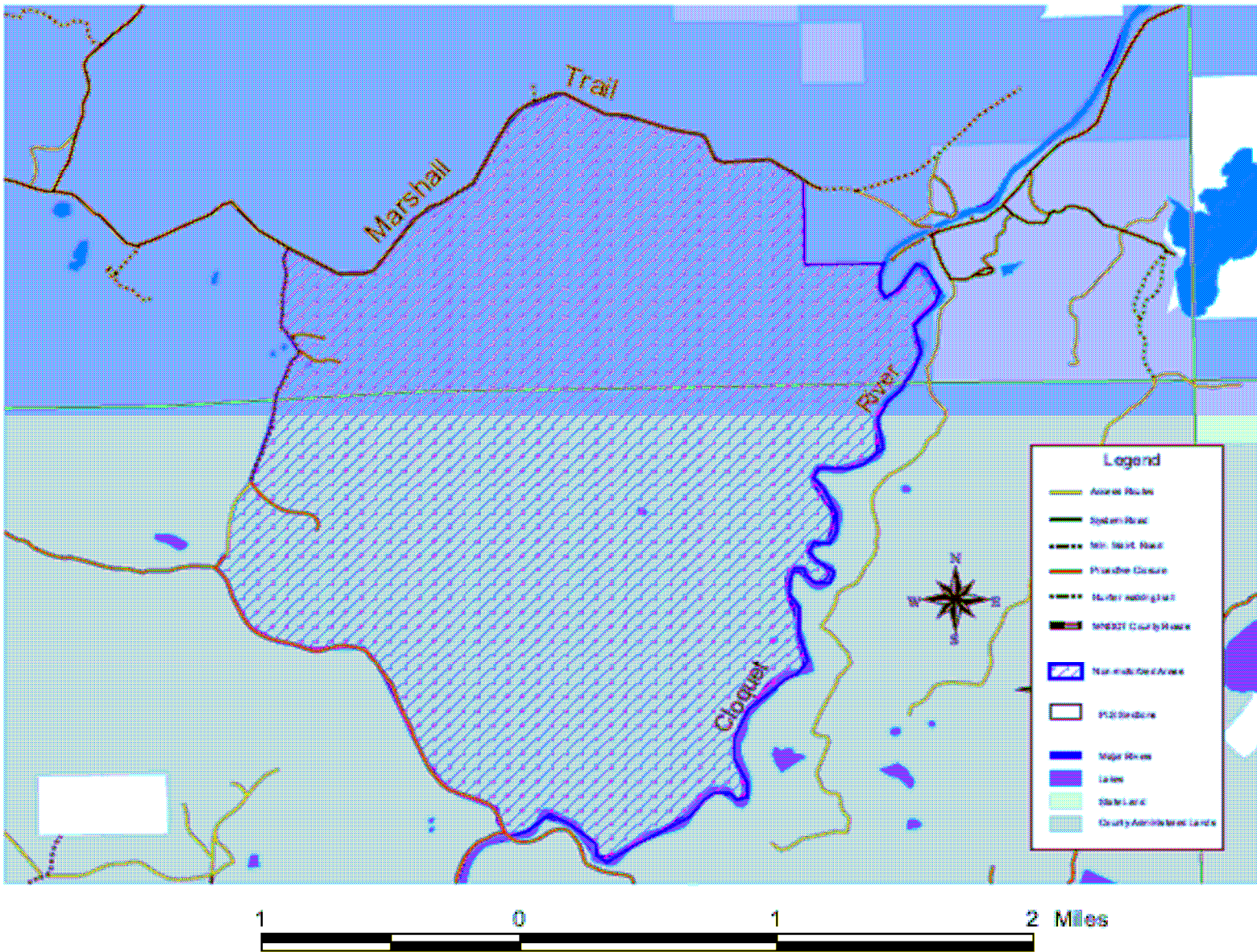
Cloquet River Northeast



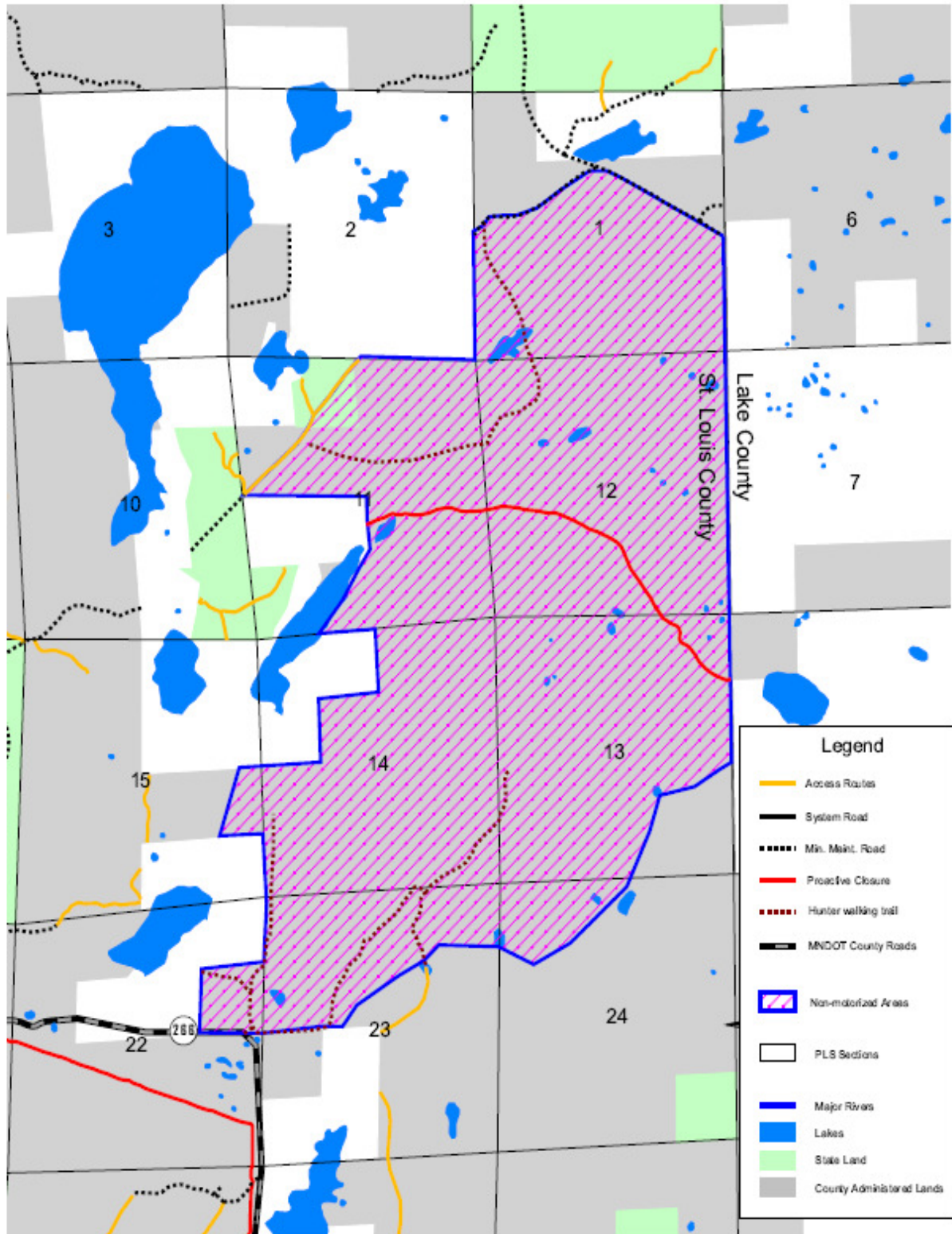
Esswhtar Lake



Marshall Trail South



Ruth Lake



1 0 1 2 Miles