

# Final Forest Classification & Motor Route Designation Plans for the Chengwatana, Gen. C.C. Andrews, Nemadji, and St. Croix State Forests

## Comments Submitted on the Draft Plans

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources presented four Draft forest Classification and Motor Route Access Plans ('Draft Plans') for public review and comment on February 2, 2004. The Draft Plans were for the Chengwatana, General C.C. Andrews, Nemadji, and St. Croix State Forests, all in Pine County, MN. The comment period ended on April 30, 2004.

Comments were received from 95 persons, individually or on behalf of an organized interest group. Comments took the form of letters, public meeting comment forms, and e-mails. Here is a listing of the persons submitting comments on the Draft Plans:

- |                            |                           |                                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Adamczak, Michael       | 33. Huber, Charlie        | 65. Paul, Reid                      |
| 2. Anonymous               | 34. Jacobsen, G.          | 66. Perschmann, Robert              |
| 3. Ayd, Eugene             | 35. Janes, Don (X4)       | 67. Peura, Ron                      |
| 4. Bartz, Sonia (X2)       | 36. Johnson, John         | 68. Prudhomme, Craig (X2)           |
| 5. Basch, D.               | 37. Jones, David          | 69. Reynolds, John (X4)             |
| 6. Begman, Garth           | 38. Juenemann, Patrick    | 70. Richards, Craig                 |
| 7. Belrose, Dave           | 39. Justice, Charles      | 71. Roche, Bill                     |
| 8. Borkenhagen, Chip       | 40. Kaplan, Andy          | 72. Sagen, Brad (X4)                |
| 9. Campbell, Lois          | 41. King, Carol           | 73. Samp, Karl, and Gail            |
| 10. Chester, Bonnie        | 42. King, John            | 74. Schmaus, Dick and Phyllis       |
| 11. Chevette, Mark         | 43. Kivisto, Al           | 75. Schmidt, Rudy (3)               |
| 12. Corbett, David         | 44. LaFleur, Joseph       | 76. Sharbo, Dave and Karen          |
| 13. Crowley, Kate          | 45. LaFleur, Mike (X2)    | 77. Sheehan, Judith and Leslie (X2) |
| 14. Danielson, Jessica     | 46. Lauer, Ron (X2)       | 78. Skluzacek, Mark                 |
| 15. Dannenbring, Cheryl    | 47. Lauer, Steve          | 79. Sorenson, Nancy                 |
| 16. Deach, David and Karen | 48. LeBoef, John          | 80. Spencer, Darrell                |
| 17. Eastman, Nancy         | 49. Lewis, Lee            | 81. Stevens, Patrick                |
| 18. Evensen, Orva          | 50. Link, Mike (X6)       | 82. Swanson, Don                    |
| 19. Evergreen PAC ATV Club | 51. Manning, Mary         | 83. Thibodeau, C.                   |
| 20. Farmer, Mary           | 52. Mathison, Duane       | 84. Thurler, Robert and Virginia    |
| 21. Gassert, Jerome        | 53. McCarthy, Terry       | 85. Trout, Jerry and Beth           |
| 22. Gassert, Jim           | 54. McCutchen, Tom        | 86. Vacinek, Dennis (X3)            |
| 23. Goddard, Will          | 55. McIntosh, John        | 87. Van Ryzin, Mark                 |
| 24. Goetzke, Dave          | 56. Menzel, Mike          | 88. Walters, Jim                    |
| 25. Grui, Eric             | 57. Miller, Mark          | 89. Wannebo, Larry (X4)             |
| 26. Gunderson, Bruce       | 58. Morgan, Lawrence      | 90. Waters, Thomas                  |
| 27. Gurnery, Steve         | 59. Myers, Gwen and Mason | 91. Weier, Pat                      |
| 28. Helgeson, Al           | 60. Nelson, Brian         | 92. Wolforth, John                  |
| 29. Hoeneg                 | 61. Newton, Jesse         | 93. Woodmansee, Alexandra           |
| 30. Holder, Amanda         | 62. Norrgard, Lois        | 94. Wright, Jennifer                |
| 31. Holder, Zeb            | 63. Norton, Matthew       | 95. Young, Cheryle                  |
| 32. Horgen, Ben            | 64. Olson, Paul           |                                     |

Departmental responses that address salient and substantive points follow the collection of comments listed below. Comments and responses are indexed and cross-referenced to one another via the links provided in the 'Response Column'.

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
(1. Adamczak) I feel it would be unfortunate to exclude the use of motorized vehicles. I enjoy getting out both on foot, bicycle, snowmobile, and in my 4WD truck. All of these activities use the forest for and in different ways, and I would be disappointed to be excluded. As a truck owner I feel threatened for the future of my forest use. Simple trails, old logging roads, etc., are both enjoyable and in my opinion not detrimental to the overall good of the forest.	Comment noted.
(2. Anonymous) These forests have a long history of motorized use that have included trucks. The ORV accounts are funding this process and should therefore have ORV trails designated. Forests are for using. There are enough areas set aside for preservation. Maintain trails, fix the problems, don't do blanket closures.	37.2 18.2 46.2 42.2
(3. Ayd) All of the state forests have a name and I have never seen one named truck forest, four-wheel forest, snowmobile forest, dirt bike forest. All these forests belong to the State. "State forests" should not be allowed to be destroyed by a very small minority of persons who are bored with life and feel it is their God-given right to amuse themselves at the expense of nature. DNR was created to look after the welfare of lands, water, air, animals, plants – large and microscopic, as well as every resident of Minnesota. I have yet to find a department of the state that was created to aid in the destruction of what the majority holds dear. Why should the "big money" lobbyists dictate the outcome of natural resources? Do what is best for the majority not the minority. Please let your conscience guide you to doing the correct thing in regards to preserving our state for generations to come.	Comment noted.
(4. Bartz) As a Board member of ATVAM, I realize and appreciate the importance of the forest planning process and trail designation. ATVAM has always supported trail planning and designation as the means for managing recreational use in our forests. As part of this process we realize and recognize the importance of closing those trails in environmentally sensitive areas. In reviewing the Nemadji plan, I became very concerned when I saw the amount and magnitude of the closures that will occur with this plan. More importantly, the closures do not make any sense as you end up having stretches of designated trail without access. To me it gives the appearance of a defacto ban. I do believe that these closures that leave "segments" open are not necessary and that the DNR can in fact provide a reasonable trail loop for OHVs to enjoy. Knowing the volunteer involvement (WRCW and Straight Arrows) with the DNR and GIA trails, and historic use of the forest, Nemadji would be a great opportunity to demonstrate cooperative efforts in managing recreational use. The manner in which these trails have been closed and the lack of partnership when GIS these trails, it gives one the sense that the DNR is not interested in continuing these relationship. This would be unfortunate! My request is that the DNR continue to provide a trail loop within Nemadji that will provide an enjoyable experience for the recreational rider.	Comment noted.  42.1  20.3  54.7
(4. Bartz) The St. Croix Forest provides an enjoyable trail experience that connects into other riding opportunities. At the same time it is a great example of multiple use that includes equestrian riders. The plan appears to continue to provide the same "loop" trail experience as in the past and continues to allow access to the other riding areas.	54.8
(5. Basch) I feel the DNR should keep as many trails open as possible, including ones they are discovering or ones that are being brought to their attention by riding clubs. Secondly, I wish there was more support for off-road motorcycles. I don't own an ATV, but love riding dirt bikes on the trails. I live near the Twin Cities, so trail riding means going at least 2 hours in any direction for a place to ride. Due to this, I feel the DNR has to preserve nearby trails that already exist and not close them as is proposed. The only complaint I have (about ATVs) is the fact that they can be used during the deer-hunting season. When you don't own an ATV and go deer hunting on forest land, it is frustrating. The ATVs push the deer further out into the forest. ATVs also give deer hunters a big advantage because they can travel farther than someone on foot, then use it to haul their deer back to camp. Should non-motor hunters be given less hunting opportunity?	Comment noted.  21.6
(6. Begman) These forests have a long history of motorized use, including ORV trucks. These trucks have long been used for recreation, photography, berry picking, hunting, fishing, sightseeing, etc. by families, including young children, the physically and mentally challenged and the elderly. By closing trails you are shutting these persons out of our forests. Forests are a resource; they are meant to be used and open to all. Trails can be set up so that everyone can coexist peacefully in the forests. The OHV account is paying for this process; therefore, ORV trails should be included. One argument against use is erosion. But, I have seen 3 horses do far more damage to a creek bed than my jeep. If you look at trails that haven't been used frequently, you can't even tell that we were there. The Minnesota & Mississippi River valleys, Badlands, Grand Canyon, would not exist if it weren't for erosion. I urge you to keep the trails open. If they have to be changed, please keep them as limited, not closed.	29.2  18.2; 29.2; 14.3 17.4

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
(7. Belrose) My wife and I own a 1985 Winnebago. We visit the St. Croix State Park and love it. We are members of the MN4WDA and are thinking of bringing up our 69 Toyota and driving the state forest roads. Please do not limit our use. That forest has a long history of motor sports usage and the impact can't truly be measured except in family memories and traditions. We need more of that in this state.	37.2
(8. Borkenhagen) Since when is the DNR's duty to be holding a popularity contest? Protecting our forests and green spaces should be the DNR's focus. Are you seriously going to let a few noisy people cry to you about not having total freedom to play with their toys wherever they want to? I'm hoping you will be more responsible to our children's children!	Comment noted.
(9. Campbell) In review of the plans for the Pine County area, I am frustrated that they do not include designating any miles of trails for off-road vehicles (ORVs). This is after more than a decade of working with the Department of Natural Resources and well over \$2 million dollars being spent from the dedicated ORV account to plan and designate ORV trail systems on state forest lands (not including funds spent on the Iron-Range Off-Highway Vehicle Area). The ORV dedicated account has been funding approximately 35% of the forest inventory and route designation process. Include ORV trails in this current plan. It is more prudent and cost effective to do now than to have to go back. I respectfully ask that quality ORV trails be included in these plans.	37.2
<p>I have been driving an ORV on public lands for over a decade with my family. My two children have spent many weekends out in the forest with us in a Jeep since before they were able to walk. We enjoy trail riding, exploring, observing wildlife, camping, picnicking, and occasionally picking wild raspberries along the way. We travel mostly on old logging roads that have often narrowed down to a "trail." This is our recreation and I am happy to say that our children choose to spend their time on the trail instead of being fixed on a television or playing video games. We spend our leisure time on the trail where the children get fresh air, exercise, see wildlife, discuss life...etc. We spend our time together as a family...we talk while we ride...life gets too hectic and these trail rides give us time to communicate and enjoy each other's companionship. It is very important family time. I do not want to lose the opportunities that are currently available. Please work with ORV enthusiasts to designate ORV trails in these forests.</p>	37.3
<p>ORV trails are sustainable if planned and developed properly. Current trails in state forests, generally, are a result of old logging roads. If some trails are unsustainable, replace them with quality, sustainable trails. Utilize volunteers to help with the trail development.</p>	37.2; 54.15
<p>Designate trails that provide quality recreation, not just access. ORV trails should be interesting and have scenery. They can have tight corners, logs, rocks, terrain changes, off-camber opportunities, and slow speed trails. Designating good trails encourages use of trails that are intended to be ridden.</p>	54.15
<p>I am attaching photos of maps with maps that have been used historically for ORVs. Some are forest roads and some are trails or old logging roads. Most of them do not distinguish between the two types. I have collected these from people that have in the past spent time in these forests. Some of the maps are quite old. Some are the maps from this process that ORV enthusiasts have put lines on that are routes from memory. I, myself, have enjoyed trails in this area in the early 90's and I hate to see these opportunities permanently lost for my children.</p>	37.9
<p>There has been an idea tossed around that areas scheduled to be logged within 5-10 years would be good for short-term ORV trails that do not entail large amounts of development costs. At the time the logging is scheduled to begin, the trail is closed or used as logging access.</p>	37.8
<p>The comment time frame was poor for these proposals. The spring closures were on so people could not confirm lines on the maps if they did not have something already on file. The comment period should have ended after the spring closures were lifted in these areas.</p>	41.2
<p>Try to connect trails when possible. If not possible, create cul-de-sac type turnarounds on deadend trails to facilitate direction change. Some trails that are deadends may be good trails that have to be traveled both ways due to trails not being able to be connected. Leave access past the Black Lake Bog open. Use simple signage to educate forest users.</p>	57.6
<p>During the public hearing for these forests, the concern of conflict between walking hunters and hunters with ATVs arose. Walking hunters not only will continue to have the opportunities in these forests, but if they prefer to not be disturbed by motorized traffic, they also have thousands of acres of Wildlife Management Areas to hunt in which are off-limits to motorized hunters.</p>	2.2 45.3 21.8
<p>There are a multitude of public lands where motorized traffic is not allowed. I enjoy also to be able to get to areas that are quiet; my Jeep gets me with my children to those places. Non-motorized trails need to be held to the same standard as motorized trails.</p>	32.16
<p>Use facts, not opinions to make decisions. Don't rely on stereotyped images. Keep an open mind.</p>	

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>Closing trails and old logging roads also impact non-motorized users as the trails disappear and access is restricted. When there is no maintenance, infrequent use results in trails growing up over the years and disappearing. In all the years of riding in the forest, I have encountered an incredibly small number of people who were not using motorized transportation.</p> <p>It is frustrating to hear people comment that by designating trails in this process, the number of trails is being increased. These trails already exist and in fact, this plan decreases the number of trails available to motorized traffic. If one looks at a map from a few decades ago, there are far more old informal trails and logging roads than there are on the current inventory maps. I respectfully ask that quality ORV trails be included in these plans.</p>	<p>54.16 41.4 42.8 48.2 37.1</p>
<p>(10. Chester) I am very impressed by the way the Nemadji is well kept, the campground is a great place to get away from all the daily routines, it offers fishing, swimming and ATVing.</p> <p>I am concerned about all the proposed closures, our Club Washington Ramsey County Wheelers have taken a lot of pride in maintaining and building trails in the Nemadji. We have a great GIA program which helps us to maintain the trails we've built in the forest.</p> <p>I fear that you have trails that no one will ever see because on both sides have closed. I don't think these miles should be included in the total number of trail miles. How do you get to the trail if both ends are closed? The Nemadji has 95,000 acres of land with very few trails, I would like to see a map that has connected loops from one end to the other.</p> <p>I would also like to see the Munger opened to ATVs. This is a necessary link to extend our loops to. I realize there are problem areas but in the future we would like to get in there and smooth out the rough spots and build bridges over wetlands. Give everyone a place to ride ATVs, bicycle, hike and hunt.</p> <p>The Nemadji is full of opportunities; don't close the trails for no reason. I realize that some trails will need to be closed for environmental reasons, but lets open other trails. Some in our club know the trails very, very well and would be very open to talking with you on some of the trails that are being closed. We ask that you take another look at the map and decide to help for loops in the Nemadji.</p> <p>We also would like to see winter riding in Nemadji State Forest, we could ride till the snow melts then close to ATVs for a short time for the spring thaw.</p>	<p>6.6 20.3 57.5 30.3 29.1 42.1 63.1</p>
<p>(11. Chevette) Please work with the truck and ORV people after spring closures have been lifted to help define the ORV trail system.</p>	<p>37.3</p>
<p>(12. Corbett) For years, I have watched as the ATV community has systematically destroyed dirt roads, side ditch, hill sides, streams, and wetlands. I have attempted to have state and local law enforcement officials take action against this group of unrestricted, unconcerned, and irresponsible group of citizens with NO action. If I had my way, we the citizens of Minnesota would do away entirely with these vehicles.</p> <p>Please, please, please save our forest, wetlands, and personal property by severely restricting the use of these off road vehicles. Without enforceable regulations, there will be little left of our state's great outdoors for our children and theirs to enjoy.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(13. Crowley) I am very concerned about OHMs being allowed on the trails near McCormick Lake (in the Gen. Andrews Forest). These machines have a high decibel, high volume sound that carries for miles. We live on the edge of this forest and these machines roar/race down the road (Walters Road) past our houses into the forest. Once trails are approved for OHMs, there will be no turning back. Numbers will just increase as these trails become better known among riders. Currently we don't dare ride our horses on these trails on weekends for fear of encountering an ATV or OHM unexpectedly on the trail.</p>	<p>28.1</p>
<p>(14. Danielson) My family has been hunting this area for some 60 years now and we have never gotten a ticket or wrecked anything in the woods. What about bear hunting (you start baiting in August)?</p> <p>I also would like to know what the cost of the ticket is because if we can't ride on the trails [like] we always have, then I would like to be prepared on what to pay?</p>	<p>21.1 13.2</p>
<p>(15. Dannenbring) I am a person who values forest areas for their beauty, peace, and quiet. I am therefore opposed to ATV/ORV use altogether. I appreciate the sensitivity shown in the plan to damage caused by ORVs, especially in wetland areas. I strongly support the "closed" designation for all trail areas going through wetlands or along and through creeks and streams.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(16. Deach) My wife and I were very impressed with the work that has been done – it is monumental. It was encouraging to see some resolution to what has become scourge to our public treasures. It is heartening to see zero proposed mileage for undesignated motorized trails.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(17. Eastman) What's up with you people; can't you just tell all these lobbyists to go away? For every one of these noisemakers there are 50 or more that can't for whatever reason. You will just listen to all the big mouths..</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
(18. Evensen) Access trails into the state forests are limited and many trails were eliminated on the proposed maps. Some trails are not connected to anything. I support (these) trail plans only if no more trails or their access points are lost or eliminated from your proposed plans as shown to us.	42.5
(19. Evergreen Pac ATV Club) Access trails into the state forests are limited and many trails were eliminated on the proposed maps. Some trails do not connect to anything. I support (these) trail plans only if no more trails or their access points are lost or eliminated from your proposed plans.	42.5
(20. Farmer) The damage I am seeing in the areas around Brainerd is beyond "just a few bad apples" philosophy. I strongly believe in the value of public land for the general good. Public land increases other land values, improves the environment, improves the ecology - or preserves ecology, and is generally a valuable asset in any area. But when I decide I can use public land for whatever I want, that causes be grave concern. The use of wetlands for mud races, fragile rocky areas for 4-wheel climbing, building "my" hunting shack in the middle of a state forest, etc. is not for the general good.	Comment noted.
(21. J. Gassert) Access trails into the state forests are limited and many trails were eliminated on the proposed maps. Some trails aren't connected to anything. I support (these) trail plans only if no more trails or their access points are lost or eliminated from your proposed plans.	42.5
(22. J. Gassert) Access trails into the state forests are limited and many trails were eliminated on the proposed maps. Some trails aren't connected to anything. I support (these) trail plans only if no more trails or their access points are lost or eliminated from your proposed plans.	42.5
<p>(23. Goddard) We can do better. This plan can and must be improved. This process is biased toward designating motorized trails. DNR admits that not all non-motorized trails were inventoried.</p> <p>Personal opinions of field staff are not an adequate measure of public demand for motorized or non-motorized trails. Public demand for quiet trails needs to be determined by DNR from statewide studies and science, not opinions.</p> <p>Conflicts of interest: Staff with connections to ATV clubs must be barred from the designation decision-making process.</p> <p>The arrangement of ATV trails puts noise throughout the forests and makes enforcement virtually impossible. The ATV trails need to be condensed to only part of the forest, and small forests should be closed to motorized vehicles.</p> <p>The motorized mileage allocates too much of the forest to a minority of forest users. The number of bird watchers in Minnesota has increased by 500,000 to 2 million in the same time that ATV users have increased to only 250,000.</p> <p>Setbacks from wetlands and waters must be increased to remove the temptation for illegal and damaging "mudding" (i.e., renegade riding) in sensitive riparian areas. Riparian areas are bigger than the wet areas according to ecologists.</p> <p>The DNR environmental review for this trail designation is inadequate, superficial and ignores cumulative impacts at the watershed and ecosystem scales.</p> <p>The proposed "hardening" of trails to make them suitable for ATV use in effect makes them roads, so they will not be popular with ATV riders and will create the negative impacts for wildlife that roads create.</p> <p>The strategy underlying the draft plans, "managed use on managed trails," will not work for ATVs like it has for snowmobiles, because snowmobiles work better on groomed trails and ATV users seek to be off-trails. There never will be enough enforcement officers to keep wildcat trails from being created off designated trails unless the trails are clustered in contained areas of forests, rather than spread throughout.</p>	<p>8.1</p> <p>52.6</p> <p>32.2</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>54.1</p> <p>32.2</p> <p>60.5</p> <p>43.1</p> <p>55.1</p> <p>54.3</p>
<p>(24. Goetzke) I am a member of the Mn Go-4 Wheelers Off Road Club as well as the MN 4 Wheel Drive Association of Minnesota. We are a user group in dire need of trails.</p> <p>The dedicated ORV account has been paying for about 35% of the inventory and designation process. Therefore, we should have a fair portion of trails designated for ORV use.</p> <p>Our state forests are for using... there are lots of non-motorized opportunities including, but not limited to, state parks, wildlife management areas, scientific and natural areas, wilderness areas, national wildlife refuges, the state forests that are already closed to motorized use and the list goes on... don't close down more areas of access. Our club affiliations have continually been involved with, and concerned with, conservation and periodic repair work (whether caused by an act of nature or usage control). It would be a shame to cut off our state accesses to our state forests.</p>	<p>Comment noted. 18.2</p> <p>46.2</p> <p>37.3</p>
(25. Grui) As an avid user of state forest trails for both ORVs and ATVs, I have personally made good use of the trails and resources in the St. Croix State Forest and the Nemadji State Forest. The potential for good truck trails in	37.3

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
the area is excellent. Why should we try to cut future use of these areas, and keep so many people from experiencing a good opportunity that is so close to home for so many of us?	
(26. Gunderson) I oppose any change to 'closed' in any of these forests. I approve of changing the designation to 'limited'. I believe that ORVs can co-exist in these forests with other users. Please, do not shut us out of these forests.	17.4; 37.3
(27. Gurney) I would like for the trails and roads to be open to all, not just the few who would like it for themselves. This is ALL of the people's land and it deserves to be open to all. The OHV account has been paying for much of the cost of this inventory and designation process. We feel there should be a fair portion of the trails designated for ORV use. Zero trails added for ORV designation is not a fair portion. We are a responsible group with our Tread Lightly Plan. Please let us continue to enjoy our sport and leave our lands open to all. Thanks.	18.2; 37.3
<p>(28. Helgeson) I am a legitimate ATV rider and ride on the trails in these forests areas. Hikers, bikers, backpackers and birders have countless village, city, county, state and federal parks within the state of Minnesota available free of charge and without access fees to enjoy their sport. And lets not forget, for a minimal user fee, they have access to the "multi-million acre" BWCA that has no motorized sports within its boundaries. Boaters have nearly any and all of the lakes in Minnesota available to them for their sport, however they must pay a modest user fee for access to these areas.</p> <p>ATVers also pay a user fee for their sport. The only areas that they have to enjoy their sport are the state and national forests and the road ditches in fewer and fewer counties in the state or private owned land. Originally this user fee and related taxes were used to pay for the development and maintenance, including signage, of legal public trails on which to ride and an integrated, cross-country trail system.</p> <p>Hikers, bikers, backpackers, and birders do not pay a user fee however they are trying to push ATVers out of the only areas in which there is currently ATV recreational access. A number of these areas already have trails that were developed and paid for by ATV user fees and by club dues and club volunteer time and now these other users are upset about ATVers using these areas and are trying to push ATVers out of the precious little state forest areas they have for their sport.</p> <p>Environmentalists have lobbied to use ATV user fee funds for, instead of the trail development for which they were intended, to repair the damage caused by a few unscrupulous riders who choose to not follow the current rules, regulations and laws. Enforcement of those very regulations is what is needed, not more restrictions. Catch, apprehend and fine those who do not follow the current laws and make them pay for the repair of the damage they have caused.</p> <p>The sport of ATVing is growing significantly and the trails, and access to them, must grow with the sport. Registration fees, gas taxes, and sales taxes are being collected on these machines and those funds need to be used to expand on the current trail systems.</p> <p>Without motorized recreation in these areas, eventually trees windfall across the trails and underbrush grows in and emergency access becomes challenged or impossible and timely rescue becomes compromised. If trails remain open to motorized sports, access is maintained for recreational as well as emergency vehicles.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>18.1</p> <p>19.4</p> <p>18.1</p> <p>29.1</p> <p>11.1</p>
(29. Hoeneg) I am a member of the MN4WDA. I spend alot of money on my hobby/sport and in the local economy of the Pine Co. State Forests. I am sure that the small communities that count on my money would want you to build and support the MN4WDA.	Comment noted.
(30. A. Holder) I would like to see trucks in the Pine co. forests. Members of the 4WD Assn have paid for 1/3 of the process, there should be ORV trails designated. There is a long history of motorized use in these forests and I'd like to see our trucks there in the future.	18.2; 25.4; 37.2
(31. Z. Holder) I'm a member of the Minnesota Four Wheel Drive Association. Pine county forests have a long history of motorized vehicle use. We have low impact for what we do, and there is natural erosion before us and after. We do a lot of maintenance of trails to help out and slow down erosion.	37.2; 14.2
<p>(32. Horgen) General Andrews S.F. has been a riding area we have enjoyed for over 25 years. Our enjoyment of General Andrews S.F. has dramatically increased since ATV use has been allowed. It is my hope that this area can be expanded to include more ATV trails. Because General Andrews S.F. is located less than 100 miles north of the Twin Cities, a large ATV trail system can become an economic stimulant to the Sturgeon Lake/Willow River area economy.</p> <p>General Andrews S.F. and the surrounding communities are a perfect place to expand the State's public riding opportunities. Currently many ATVers commonly travel north from the Twin Cities on Highway 35 to Hinckley, Minnesota. At Hinckley, instead of continuing north they turn east and take their dollars outside the state to Danbury, Wisconsin. The biggest problem with the current scenario is that most of the ATV trails which attract rider</p>	Comment noted.

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>to Danbury exist on Minnesota State land. We are using our Minnesota land for ATV use but sending the economic benefits out of state. Let's attract that money back into state by developing a strong trail system around the General Andrews S.F. and Highway 35 not closing some of the trails which currently exist.</p> <p>Expanding General Andrews S.F. would create a great trail system to complement the North &amp; South Soo Line Trails. Plus Sturgeon Lake is only one and half hours south of Gilbert, Minnesota and the State's only OHV park. Having an attractive ATV riding opportunity right off Highway 35 would give ATV riders a huge choice of trails within a small radius. From Sturgeon Lake ATVers have General Andrews S.F., Nemadji S.F. (currently the best riding in the Midwest!), the North and South Soo Line trails, and Gilbert OHV Park all within a short drive..</p>	
<p>(33. Huber) I went to the Rutledge meeting. The Staff was very knowledgeable and helpful. Some of the "existing trails" that were included in the inventory were not motorized trails. This artificially inflates the number of existing motorized trails. And, now the non-motorized user may lose some trails.</p> <p>With so many miles of trails proposed for motorized use in all areas (except for the middle of large swamps) one is almost never more than half a mile from a trail or road. Therefore, eliminate the "off-trail exemption" in "limited" forests for big game hunting and stand building. It's NOT needed. Make an exemption for handicapped persons. As it is now these forests allow off-trail use for a full four months of the year with valid hunting license! All these designated and maintained trails will only create more off-trail use during the hunting season if this hunting season if this hunting exemption is not eliminated.</p> <p>A LOT of hard work went into these proposed plans, but what about the future? The DNR should be telling ATV owners and prospective owners NOW that they should NOT expect state or county forests to provide new trails or providing land for them in the future.</p>	<p>Comment noted. 52.4</p> <p>21.4</p> <p>21.7</p> <p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(34. Jacobsen) As a responsible 4 X 4 recreationist and a taxpayer, I urge you to assist in keeping our forest open to motorized use, specifically off-highway trucks. Our OHV account is paying for much of the process costs. We should get designated trails and use of the forests. Please work with us.</p>	<p>17.4 18.2 37.3</p>
<p>(35. Janes) Re: Chengwatana State Forest, I would like to comment that ATV trails should be kept away from the St. Croix River, both because of potential erosion and contamination of this wild and scenic river, but also because of the noise pollution which interferes with the use of the river by canoeists and others.</p> <p>I also believe that the Munger Trail East should not be used for ATVs.</p>	<p>61.7</p> <p>30.3</p>
<p>(35. Janes) Re: General Andrews State Forest Draft Plan. My major concern is the density of trails. This state forest is only about 8 square miles, yet it looks like about 50 miles of trails would be open, or about 6 miles/square mile. It almost seems like an ATV park. What about other users? Where will they find peace and quiet in their state forest? It seems to me that the 17 miles of state forest road should be enough for ATV users in such a small state forest.</p>	<p>51.1</p>
<p>(35. Janes) re: St. Croix State Forest . It looks like you propose closing most of the trails very close to the Lower Tamarack and the St. Croix. This is good in that it limits the amount of run off into these rivers. However, as someone who has gone canoeing on both these rivers, I believe that ATV trails should be at least a half-mile from the river to cut down on noise pollution.</p> <p>There should be large areas, maybe half the total area of the forest, reserved for non-motorized uses. Just about every section in the main part of the forest has a proposed trail. Non-motorized users such as grouse hunters like me need areas where they can be without being impacted by ATVs. Having large areas ATV free will aid enforcement also.</p>	<p>61.9</p> <p>32.2</p>
<p>(35. Janes) Re: Nemadji proposed plan. The plan includes some large areas without trails. This is a good feature in that it recognizes the needs of non- motorized users, not to mention wildlife. There are still 341 miles of trail proposed for this 145 square mile forest, or more than two miles per square mile, which is a lot. If you do the math for a highly developed agricultural area like Iowa, with roads every mile, it turns out the road density is 2 miles per square mile. So the Nemadji would be higher density than Iowa, which makes it seem to me that we are losing any sense of the wild outdoors.</p>	<p>51.2</p>
<p>(36. Johnson) I'm asking for your help to keep these forests open to the trucks. I am an avid trail rider and I have driven the trails in these forests in the past. I would love the opportunity to continue to do so. These forests have been open in the past to this use and it is no threat to the environment or its surroundings. In fact if given the opportunity we could help nature. As users, we are all for helping to clean areas up, repair areas as necessary. In fact, you will find that the volunteer hours of the Minnesota 4 Wheel Drive Association probably equals the trail time we have spent. There is no reason for closing our trails. After all, it is "public" property, correct?</p>	<p>17.4</p> <p>37.2</p> <p>42.3</p>
<p>(37. Jones) I am writing you regarding the trails situation within, particularly within the Nemadji. I was told that there would be a public meeting in Rutledge on the 17<sup>th</sup>. When I got there there was a wedding instead. I drove up</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>there for nothing. When I stopped in Sandstone I was informed by a man leaving the office that it was the Wednesday before. This was a disappointment to say the least.</p> <p>I still would like to be able to use some of the existing roads as primitive routes for our full sized 4X4 vehicles in the future. I found a rather old map in my house that has forest fire plan maps for Park and Belden townships, Pine County. I will provide this for reference.</p> <p>Since I was misinformed of the date, and a lot of the 4 X 4 clubs do not meet until the beginning of the month I would request an extension to the deadline for mail input to the forest plan.</p> <p>I know that there were several maps marked up of trails possibilities and deposited in the different district offices. These should give you enough suggestions to start some trails for our use.</p> <p>I would also like to explore the possibility that one or more of our groups taking care of an existing route. We would all like to see some trails for our use nearer the Twin Cities, and the idea of one within the Nemadji is very much of interest to our people.</p>	<p>37.1</p> <p>24.1</p> <p>41.1</p> <p>37.1</p> <p>20.2</p>
<p>(38. Juenenmann) It has come to my attention that the Pine County Forests have come under attack. This forest has been open to motorized use for a long time, please leave it that way. I have not yet ridden these trails but look forward to riding them in the future.</p>	<p>Comment noted. 37.2</p>
<p>(39. Justice) I have hiked and ridden horseback in the Chengwatana State Forest for over twenty years. While I believe the proposed core ATV trail (i.e., Munger) is not suitable for off-road use there are many other trails in the forest that are not suitable at all. These trails are now, or were, single track trails that either follow the Snake River or are trails that have many low spots that never really dry out.</p> <p>If trails are supposed to be multiple-use then they should be trails that can be maintained for all users. When trails become rutted and when standing water is created by erosion, the trails become less attractive or not useable by some groups. Birders, hikers, mountain bikers, hunters, and horseback riders find topography that has been damaged by off-roaders difficult to travel.</p> <p>The last five years has seen numerous trails created by ATVs. I've seen trees and brush cut down or run over and I've seen ATVs running across Red Horse Creek just for the "fun" of it.</p> <p>Multiple use can only be viable if all users follow set regulations and guidelines. Common sense and courtesy are going to be necessary if different users are to share trails in the same forest. I've encountered many ATVs while riding horseback or running sled dogs and many have acted very responsibly when meeting someone using animals. I've engaged tens of ATV users over the last several years and I've never met one, yes not one, who was familiar or had ever read the state's rules and regulations concerning the operation of ATVs. Not one single person knew they were by law supposed to shut down their machine until horses had passed or until they were waved on.</p> <p>I've engaged tens of ATV users over the last several years and I've never met one, yes not one, who was familiar or had ever read the state's rules and regulations concerning the operation of ATVs. Not one single person knew they were by law supposed to shut down their machine until horses had passed or until they were moved on.</p> <p>There has to be parts of the Chengwatana that is off-limits to motorized use so that at least a fraction of our natural resources can be enjoyed by those who don't want to hear motors racing.</p> <p>The Chenwatana is the west boundary of the St. Croix River, which is a federally designated Wild and Scenic Riverway. Canoeists and kayakers should not have to listen to the roar of off road vehicles as they travel on the river. Have any Minnesota State people even talked to the National Park Service about any concerns they might have about motorized use in the Chengwatana?</p> <p>I would urge the MnDNR to continue to be responsible stewards of the state's resources. No single or vocal minority should formulate policies that do not serve the interests of all Minnesotans.</p>	<p>39.1</p> <p>29.1</p> <p>53.1</p> <p>59.2</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>32.1</p> <p>61.5</p> <p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(40. Kaplan) The Pine County Forests have a long history of motorized use (in all 4 forests). I have personally driven my Jeep on trails in these forests and strongly urge you to support a quality trails system for ORVs and Jeeps. Please remember that the ORV account is paying for this process.</p>	<p>37.2; 18.2</p>
<p>(41. C. King) I am commenting on the Hay Creek Sled Dog Trails in the St. Croix State Forest. According to the proposed changes, it appears that ATV and ORV usage will be allowed on most of the existing road areas. The main problem with these changes is that it will allow more non-hunting usage. Riders will dead end after only 2-3 miles of riding with only a sign as a deterrent to stop them from continuing. A gate or other types of trail blocking measures would not be very effective at dead ends.</p> <p>I am proposing an alternative to the dead end. As the trail reaches the end a circular loop with a minimum turning radius of a city bus could be developed at all of the planned dead ends. This change in the trail will be beneficial for several reasons. One reason is that it will redirect riders without a complete stop. Another reason is that it would allow sled dog drivers to then use these trails also. Many dog drivers use ATV's as a dry land training</p>	<p>59.4</p> <p>57.6</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>vehicle. The dogs are hitched to the front and pull the vehicle with the motor on or off. Various other vehicles are used also, ATVs with the motor disabled or removed, 3 or 4 wheeled carts and bicycles. Currently these trails are only open to dog sledders during the winter or snow covered season. With the suggestions I have proposed here and the DNR planned changes it would allow dog sledders usage of these trails with wheeled vehicles from September 15 through November 1, (closed during deer gun season to prevent user conflicts), and then reopened December 1 or until snow depth reached 4".</p> <p>The changes to the trail could be done with volunteers from the local Sled Dog club and moneys from non-OHV funds to further distance it from a recreational OHV riding area. I am the trail work volunteer coordinator for the local club. Our local club has been working with the DNR to develop these trails for the past 7 years. Within the membership of the club we currently have several people willing to write grant applications to access funding to develop these trails with moneys dedicated for non-motorized use. Any recommendations as to the best grant type to apply for this trail could be directed to me and I will forward to the correct person.</p> <p>In closing, I would be very disappointed to see this area become a recreational riding area for OHVs.</p>	59.4
<p>(42. J. King) Please don't change the forest classification to closed!</p> <p>The dedicated ORV account has been paying for apprimately 35% of this inventory and designation process. Therefore we should have a fair portion designated for ORV use...Zero trails for ORV designation is unfair.</p> <p>Our state forests are for using... There are lots of non-motorized opportunities set aside on a vast amount of public lands including, but not limited to, state parks, wildlife management areas, scientific and natural areas, wilderness areas, national wildlife refuges, the state forests that are already closed to motorized use and the list goes on... don't close down more areas of access.</p> <p>Once a trail is closed to motorized use, quite often the vegetation grows up and the trail disappears. If that happens, then the non-motorized users no longer have that trail to use after that because there is no maintenance to keep it open for their use either.</p> <p>It is difficult to give exact areas of trails desired due to timing of the comment period because spring closures have been in force and are just being lifted so it is difficult to review exact locations of good quality trails. In closing, PLEASE keep the trails open for motorized use!</p>	17.4 18.2 46.2 19.5 41.2 Comment noted.
<p>(43. Kivisto) I'd like to see the Willard Munger Trail opened to connect the western/central forest trails together. Most of this trail is high, and would not create "environmental damage" if opened. It's the "backbone" of the Nemadji forest, and would create a great loop to enjoy a day-long ride without back-tracking – if opened. Also other smaller loops would become usable if an all-day ride isn't wanted. There are other trails that would then, or then could become, a loop, instead of as existing now. This "trail" was and still is a road, meant for trucks, and with very little maintenance could become the central or main route through the forest.</p>	30.3
<p>(44. J. LaFleur) For the last ten years, I have hunted in and enjoyed the Nemadji. This forest is of EXTREME importance to me. My dad brought me there when I was only ten. My first experience there was one of solitude, a place away from cars, motors, noise, and pollution. It was a place where I was actually part of the environment, not removed form it like I am in Minneapolis. Any further moves to make this a mechanized place, where I can no longer "get away" is truly a crime.</p> <p>There should be no designated motorized trails near the Wild &amp; Scenic River Corridor in the Nemadji..</p> <p>Please correct any broken segments leading to nowhere as well as spurs ending in wetland areas. For example the southwestern segment between Johnson Creek and East Fork Crooked Creek should be closed. Straight north of this broken segment, north of the Northern Pine Trail and west of the Tamarack River is a broken segment that requires closing. Please check others and close all unneeded as well as those tempting illegal access to wetlands.</p> <p>Please provide adequately strong protection for the Black Lake Bog SNA. It is preferable that no trail be in close proximity to this important area.</p> <p>Please only designate trails within the capacity of staff time for enforcement as well as monitoring and maintenance. Please cluster trails in a way to better facilitate these management activities.</p>	Comment noted. 61.1 57.3 2.1 13.6; 22.3; 12.8
<p>(45. M. LaFleur) There should be no OHVs in the St. Croix or Chengwatana State Forests; they are too small and not enough room to get away from ATVs. In the other forests hunting is a major recreation. Trails should be closed from September to November so grouse hunting can take place. This is a traditional use - motorized recreation is not.</p> <p>Trail systems should be small, well constructed and heavily policed. Keep trails out of wetlands and away from deer yards, wintering areas, and other sensitive wildlife areas.</p> <p>I have grouse hunted in the Nemadji for over 30 years. It is so wild and so accessible for me in the NE Metro.</p>	59.1 54.1 Comment noted.

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
Keep the system small, well maintained, and well policed. Save the Nemadji!	Comment noted.
The motorized interests are numerous and highly organized. The way we have to beat them is by having all of us who think first about the resource submit comments to counterweigh their rider-centric comments.	Comment noted.
Managed use on managed trails: I strongly support the Department of Natural Resources' position for off-road management as "managed use on managed trails." We must acknowledge that unmanaged off-road vehicle use is one of the greatest threats to the long-term health of our forests. Encompassed in this Policy is the requirement that all motorized trails need to be assessed as to whether they can be designated in a manner that protects natural resources, environmental values (e.g., quiet, landscape character), public safety and the experience of other users.	54.5 12.6
We must not create a trail system that is not able to be managed adequately with the available staff hours that can be dedicated to it. This means a system mile ratio that matches the CO's time to enforce as well as the Trails and Waterways staff to monitor. Monitoring for impacts should occur on a regular basis – perhaps monthly as well as after large rain events.	
a. Please provide specific plans for enforcement of these trail miles. b. Please provide specific plans for monitoring, maintaining and repairing or closing these trail miles if unacceptable impacts do occur.	13.6 22.3 Comment noted.
While it is understood that there is a place for OHVs in our forests, it is not everywhere. If ATVs and other off-road vehicles are allowed to go everywhere, there won't be anywhere left for the rest of us to enjoy nature, peace, and quiet.	32.4
Realistically, for every mile you designate for motorized trail access you are taking away access for the vast majority of forest users who prefer peace and quiet and an escape from the noisy ratrace at home or office. When revved and running OHVs can be heard at great distances of up to and over two miles. Even if a single machine can be heard for only one mile it still has a "soundshed" affecting a great distance – especially when compounded by the average length of the preferred trail ride (Genereux Study) of 33 miles. This can affect all the people and wildlife within an area of 69 square miles (33-mile long X 2-mile wide soundshed, plus a semi-circle on each end with a radius of 1 mile).	32.5
Non-motorized Zones: Now is the time for the DNR to plan progressively and create a mix of motorized and non-motorized zones within the State Forests. As shown in the above note regarding "soundsheds" the plans we are being presented with for the State Forests are creating unacceptable impacts to the vast majority of users of these forests (e.g., the quiet users). By each trail mile created there is essentially a loss of access, or at least a loss of quality experience, for the walking hunter, wildlife watcher, hiker, skier as well as fishing and camping interests.	48.1
Total Trail Miles: The amount of overall miles being proposed as OHV routes is also of concern. The State of Wisconsin in total has 1500 OHV trail miles, and here in Pine County alone with existing and new proposed routes we will have a total of 345 miles; we must remember that motorized recreation is a small percentage of overall recreational activities on our state forests.	57.1
Unconnected Segments: There are many segments seemingly unconnected to other trails or spur trails that end near lakes and wetlands on many of the maps, leading to the temptation for machines to go "off trail." I suggest that the DNR make corrections to these trail maps where these problems do exist.	61.5; 61.12; 61.13
Wild and Scenic River Corridors and State Parks: There should be no designated trails along or in close proximity to the St. Croix River (a nationally designated Wild and Scenic River) as well as the Kettle River (a State designated Wild and Scenic River), or Spider Lake and other important waters of the state, including wetlands, lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, such as Bungo Creek. There should be no trails along or in close proximity to the St. Croix State Park or any other park or Wildlife Management Area. The probability of trespass into these protected areas could be high and the DNR would be wise to eliminate the temptation.	Comment noted. 61.5; 32.3; 57.2; 13.6; 22.3; 12.8
Specific comments - St. Croix: There should be no designated motorized trails in proximity to the Wild and Scenic River Corridor. There should be no new designated trails near Hiking/Walking trails as well as Horseback trails. There should absolutely not be ATVs on Horseback trails. These uses are exclusive and combining will cause safety issues. Please correct any broken segments leading to nowhere as well as spurs ending in wetland areas. Please be sure to only designate trails within the capacity of staff time for enforcement as well as monitoring and maintenance. Please cluster trails in a way to better facilitate these management activities.	61.1; 57.2; 57.3; 2.1; 13.6; 22.3; 12.8
Nemadji: There should be no designated motorized trails near the Wild and Scenic River Corridor in the Nemadji State Forest. Please correct any broken segments leading to nowhere as well as spurs ending in wetland areas. For example the southwestern segment between Johnson Creek and East Fork Crooked Creek should be closed. Straight north of this broken segment, north of the Northern Pine Trail and west of the Tamarack River is a broken segment that requires closing. Please check others and close all unneeded as well as those tempting illegal access to wetlands. Please provide adequately strong protection for the Black Lake Bog SNA. It is preferable that	

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>no trail be in close proximity to this important area. Please be sure to only designate trails within the capacity of staff time for enforcement as well as monitoring and maintenance. Please cluster trails in a way to better facilitate these management activities.</p> <p>General C.C. Andrews: This should be a closed forest due to it's extreme small size. Any motorized access eliminates the quality of the experience for other forest users. As shown in above soundshed equation there would be no where for a quiet user to go to escape ATV noise. This forest is for the most part only 2 miles in width throughout. An increase to 59 miles of motorized trails within this small forest is unacceptable.</p> <p>Chengwatana: There should be no trails designated near (within 2 miles of) the Wild and Scenic River corridor. There should be no trail miles within close proximity (1 mile) to the St. Croix State Park. This forest should be a "Closed" forest because of it's small size and long thin shape. The greatest width is just over 3 miles and again the "soundshed" from motorized recreation would cause undue impact to the majority of forest users wishing for a natural, quiet experience.</p> <p>Thanks to Lois Norrgard for compiling these comments. We're now down to the wire on these first 6 forests, folks!!! Now is the time to type and hit "send"!!! Call me with any questions. Matt Norton</p>	<p>17.1</p> <p>61.5; 61.6; 17.2</p> <p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(46. R. Lauer) As a landowner adjacent to Chengwatana, along the Munger Trail, I am concerned about the classification of routes in the forest. It at first appeared that it was a given that the majority of Chengwatana would be closed to indiscriminate use by 4-wheelers, which would be environmentally sound and a boon to those of us who prefer a more traditional use of a large part of the forest. As of late, with the comments of some state legislators, I am not so sure, especially the comments that a 4-wheeler can traverse a wetland and the tracks will not be visible the next season.</p> <p>This might, possibly, even be true if it was a single vehicle, traveling a route one time, but anybody familiar with the 4-wheeler use of Chengwatana can tell you that they are like canines, the next one follows the route of the previous one, who follows the route of the route of the previous one, who follows...ad nauseam. The result is a trail that one used to be able to walk in knee boots is at first hip boot deep, then over chest waders and finally no longer wadeable at all...and a trail that was once a deer trail wide becomes a 4-wheeler wide, then as that becomes impassible, two 4-wheelers wide, then three and four and so on. I have personally seen places I could walk as a young man become totally impassible to man or beast. I have personally seen places that used to be remote enough to offer quality hunting to those willing to walk the extra mile become crowded and noisy and ugly.</p> <p>I am hoping the DNR is able to preserve as much of the forest as it can for those who come after us. I am past middle age, but have sons and will have grandsons, who I hope can use the forest and pass it on to their sons and grandsons, without witnessing its' destruction. Please limit the use of ATV's, and make the allowed usage have minimum impact on the resource because, once destroyed, it will take generations for nature to restore it.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(46. R. Lauer) I am writing regarding use of ATVs in Pine County's state forests. I own land adjacent to Chengwatana and am a fourth generation user of the forest as a hunter, trapper and fisherman, my sons are the fifth generation and my concern is for the still to be born sixth generation.</p> <p>In my lifetime I have seen the Chengwatana go from occasional motorized use by tractors, as people drove out to their deer camps, to use by snowmobilers, to use by ATVs. I believe the latter have the potential to destroy the Chengwatana as we know it. I, personally, didn't use a tractor, but their rutted trails, while unsightly, were still walkable, and their off -trail potential was limited. I, personally, didn't use a snowmobile, but their trails, come spring, are still walkable, and the only damage is the litter. Their off-trail potential, while there, disappears with the snow. I, personally, do not use an ATV, but their rutted trails are not walkable and their off-trail potential is unlimited.</p> <p>The more areas of the Chengwatana you open to ATVs, the greater this problem will become. If you honestly believe opening trails means that ATV operators will remain on them, you are naive. They know, as well as you do, that enforcement will be impossible. Right now, with the Munger Trail closed and posted with large pink signs, ATVs are on it every weekend.</p> <p>Chengwatana is in a unique position, in that it is the close to the greater metropolitan area and will see a large amount of use. It is also relatively small when compared to many state forests, and is landlocked from other Pine County state forests by St. Croix State Park, which means ATVers will soon grow tired of their trails and take off cross country. The Chengwatana is also especially vulnerable because so much of it is wetland, the type of environment most affected by ATV rutting. The potential for destroying the area is just too great. I urge you to use common sense and limit the use of ATVs.</p> <p>We ought not have our environment destroyed for their pleasure.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>19.3</p> <p>13.8</p> <p>54.6</p> <p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(47. S. Lauer) I think it is naive to assume that a designated trail plan is going to keep ATVs on trails. The ATVs</p>	<p>19.2</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>are not designed to ride on flat terrain like snowmobile trails, they dig in the mud and run over small trees.</p> <p>Everyone knows there is not enough enforcement to keep these things on the trail and we already know what happens when you ask the ATVing public to police themselves, that's why we are here today.</p> <p>Most of the swamps in the southern half of the Chengwatana are dry enough at some point of the year to be ripped to shreds and everybody know it will happen if the ATVs are given access. If one percent of the ATVing public is bent on destruction (I believe its closer to 50%) just think of the mess we will be left with in five years.</p> <p>How can anyone think that the hunter exclusion is a good idea? Giving this crowd free reign frightens me to death. When I first looked at the trail plan I thought someone had finally had a clear thought and had decided to save the southern half of Chengwatana. Not the case. If I had not attended the meeting in Rutledge I would have had no way to know the trail plan is not complete, and that the Willard Munger trail is listed as closed only because of environmental review. As a landowner near the snowmobile bridge over the Snake River, I will cry real tears the day that trail opens. Once it happens, we can't go back. Please think long and hard before you make that decision.</p>	<p>13.7</p> <p>60.6</p> <p>21.4</p> <p>30.1</p>
<p>(48. LeBoef) Access trails into the state forests limited and many trails were eliminated on the proposed maps. Some trails were not connected to anything. I/we support these trail plans only if no more trails or their access points are lost or eliminated from your proposed plans as show to us at the public meeting.</p>	<p>42.5</p>
<p>(49. Lewis) I think the inventory of trails in the Pine Co. forests is a very good start.. The DNR has done a good job in identifying those trails that have a history of motorized use and can be ridden safely with minimal damage.</p> <p>General comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trails open to OHV use should be clustered. Because the machines create quite a bit of noise, by clustering motorized trails, it would allow silent sport trails to be "out of ear shot" of the machines. Clustering would minimize potential conflict between users and create a more enjoyable experience for all users of the state forests.</li> <li>• Besides the inventory and prior to final designation, the DNR staff ought to determine how many of the designated OHV trails can be adequately maintained and monitored. Trails should not be designated open unless they can be effectively maintained and monitored. Unless trails are maintained and monitored, the quality of the resource will suffer, conflicts will occur and user experiences will diminish over time.</li> <li>• Once those steps are taken, the results should be reviewed to assure that the final recommendations make a useable plan for all stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p>Specific comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under most circumstances, small state forests should be closed to OHV use. Therefore, consideration ought to be given to designating General C.C. Andrews closed to OHV use.</li> </ul> <p>I have a cabin on the Upper Tamarack River at the end of Pansy Landing Road in Markville. Generally, the trail designations in that area seem reasonable. There is a forest road/trail to the west of Pansy Landing road, designated as open to OHV use, that runs south and then turns west to cross Trout Creek near the St. Croix. Recently I have noticed that OHVs have traveled along the St. Croix on U.S. Park Service property. (I understand that OHV travel on the Wild and Scenic land is not allowed.) Every effort should be made to keep OHVs on the designated trail and direct them away from the St. Croix. I am concerned that, unless that happens, riders will create a loop that consists of the designated trail, the bank of the St. Croix and Pansy Landing Road. Please notify me when the final plan is adopted.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>54.2</p> <p>22.3</p> <p>22.3</p> <p>17.1</p> <p>13.4</p> <p>41.5</p>
<p>(50. Link) I support the closing of trails in Willow River / Andrews State Forest. This is overdue. The land and forest is in sensitive soil and plant communities. Confining OHV use to roads makes the most sense. he area south of the Willow River is a good place to remove motorized recreation from the forest.</p>	<p>62.1</p>
<p>(50. Link) When will you give a voice to those of us who live in the state forest and oppose the noise, dust, and destruction? If this is going to work we need enforcement.</p>	<p>Comment noted. 13.1</p>
<p>(50. Link) I am tired of having the dollar issue brought up all the time. Give us a non-game stamp to buy.</p>	<p>18.1</p>
<p>(50. Link) Make the area south of the Willow River mountain bike, hike, canoe, and ski only!</p>	<p>62.1</p>
<p>(50. Link) There needs to be a quiet zone by McCormick Lake. A place to protect a possible prairie-savannah landscape. This area would serve natural landscapes, endangered plant communities, and provide a place for families (i.e., skiing, hiking, and nature reflection).</p>	<p>28.1</p>
<p>(50. Link) Aren't these forests? When did they become recreation sites? Please look at the forests and how do we get management to look at enhancing savannahs, deciduous and coniferous forests, and what this county could be instead of being a recreation response group.</p>	<p>46.1</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>(51. Manning) I wanted to send a few comments from the meeting in Rutledge on the forest OHV plans.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Several trails are shown as being motorized in part, then reaching a point and switching to non-motorized. I know this is the case for the St. Croix Forest in the area that is designated as Dogsled trails (north of CR 25 between McDermott Creek and Hay Creek). I have been one of the mushers involved with opening that trail system up during the past several years and am familiar with the trails and their use. My concern with officially designating the trails as open is that the average OHV rider is not going to stop and turn his/her machine around in the "middle" of a through trail just because a sign says they should. This is my experience in this area in the past. Parts of the trail go through some delicate areas and 1-2 machines could easily destroy the flora and trash trail for winter use. Careful planning needs to go into providing ways to transition that allow non-motorized users (including dogsleds for winter use) to access those trails while providing adequate (and idiot-proof) turnarounds to motorized users. Turnarounds could be constructed at those junctures that would also allow dog sledders to use the motorized areas for fall cart training; this would increase dog sled user days both in the fall and during the winter as a chief complaint I have heard is that some mushers prefer to train in winter in areas they have familiarized themselves with during the fall.</li> <li>2. I do think it would be good to have some areas of the forests designated as non-motorized. I have 4 wheelers and I have non-motorized hobbies (biking, walking, skiing, dogsledding, etc.). Not all motorized users care to share and getting a mouthful of dust is no fun. The General Andrews and Nemadji (2 forests closest to my home) have 2 miles of non-motorized trails each. If not for the money of the horse riders, the St. Croix would be similar. This is woefully lop-sided compared to the 49 and 208 miles of motorized trails respectfully that are proposed.</li> <li>3. On the maps presented for the St. Croix in the "dogsled trails" there is a trail in the far west loop (near McDermott Creek) that bisects the loop into a north and south half. I don't believe that there is a trail there, unless new logging has created one. This has been an ongoing issue in this area in general, however. Non-motorized use takes the back burner to logging efforts. Sometimes we end up with improvements to the trail system, sometimes we end up struggling to figure out where the non-motorized trail lies beneath the tracks of motorized users.</li> <li>4. I'm glad to have the state recognizing that trails need to be signed as open before users access them. It has been far to easy for riders (a minority of them) to remove signs closing an area and open it for themselves and those who don't have a clue what's open and what isn't.</li> <li>5. I think the planned changes will help, but the state needs to put up the money for more enforcement. I understand that the state is running training for new officers, but realistically, we still won't be above the same enforcement levels we have 60 years ago once those new officers are on and the older one retire. Write all the rules you want, more people means more law-breakers.</li> <li>6. Out-state Minnesota needs the same type of trespass laws that the metro area has and that Wisconsin has--if it isn't yours and you don't have specific permission to be on it, you should stay off. It isn't fair to require landowners to spend money every year to post their property against trespass only to have offenders tear the signs done and feign ignorance. This would help put responsibility onto motorized users to know where they are and to ride responsibly.</li> </ol>	<p>57.6</p> <p>32.5; 32.7</p> <p>52.5; 46.5</p> <p>22.2</p> <p>13.1</p> <p>56.1</p> <p>41.5</p>
<p>(52. Mathison) It has come to my attention that ORVs are being unjustly discriminated against in our forests. As part of your efforts to classify individual forests as closed or open for motorized use, ATVs, OHMs, and snowmobiles continue to gain trails while ORVS actually lose.</p> <p>My wife and I have just recently started to explore our forests here in Minnesota and had planned to do a lot more in the coming years. I have experienced the interconnected mud holes you refer to as "trails" in the Spider Lake recreation area. The best thing found on the trail system was the "challenge hill" and the potential of the "log challenge" areas. If I've heard correctly these obstacles are to be closed. My feeling is that you have no idea what the modern day 4 X 4 enthusiast is all about or what we are looking for in a trail system.</p> <p>In the past it has been my understanding that ORVs were free to roam the forest trails even though they had not been designated as ORV trails. I can't begin to explain how much I would miss the freedom to roam the forest trails and the fellowship I have enjoyed with the new friends I have met associated with this hobby. I enjoy the outdoors very much. I don't hunt or fish; I do enjoy photography and trail rides. While in the forest it is a real treat to see the deer, birds, and other wildlife in their home, as they should be.</p> <p>Along with the natural beauty we encounter we also enjoy the challenges involved with traversing the rough forest trails. We get a lot of satisfaction from going in our custom vehicles places that most people will never be</p>	<p>37.1; 37.2</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
able to see from their station wagon or minivan. Yes, we could have similar experiences with an ATV. However, an ATV is noisy, dirty, dangerous, expensive, and you can't pack a decent lunch or bring the family.	
<p>(53. McCarthy) As plans are developed for our forests with regard to OHVs, I believe it is necessary to halt funding to local clubs in the wake of the David Dill fiasco. We need to make sure that our dwindling monies are being used efficiently. An audit or some form of accounting must take place to figure out to what degree our \$\$ are being misused.</p> <p>There should be places where ATVs, etc. can be used on public lands and I would be more in favor of what many other states have done – allow those vehicles only in areas posted for them. Otherwise, public lands are off-limits to them.</p> <p>When it comes time to set up criteria for where trails might be least destructive and invasive, the state already has delineated criteria used to assist in making those decisions. They are numerous and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• would the trail impact endangered or threatened plant communities?</li> <li>• would it affect critical wildlife habitats?</li> <li>• would wetlands be encroached upon?</li> <li>• would it traverse lands with soil types or topography that could cause excessive erosion?</li> <li>• no trails across or adjacent to streams, creeks or rivers.</li> <li>• would noise from ATVs, etc. affect private landowners or animal habitat?</li> <li>• is there fund to maintain trails and enforce regulations?</li> </ul> <p>ATVs and 4x4s can be extremely damaging to the environment. It is imperative that state and local government and groups work together to protect our public lands for the benefit of the many from the destructive activities of the few.</p>	<p>20.4</p> <p>54.10</p> <p>54.4</p> <p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(54. McCutchen) General Andrews Forest – South of Dago Lake Road on river. Traffic on weekends, particularly Memorial Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, and Labor Day, is extremely heavy and very fast and loud. Trail bikes by 12-13 year olds the worst. 2002, two accidents occurred on Memorial Day; both were hit by weekend riders; one auto, on 4-wheeler were hit; no personal injury, just property damage. There is never any control or patrol at any time and I've observed DNR personnel standing silent as 4-wheelers entered a posted wetland after riding past Dago Lake DNR. Excuse? We're not authorized. Who is or should be in control? Yes, we do own a 4-wheel Honda and are frightened of weekend riding. We're 75 years old and ride to see woods and animals.</p>	<p>Comment noted. 13.5</p>
<p>(55. McIntosh, Sievers) We will only protect what we understand and value. In an increasingly noisy and busy world, children - the decision-makers of the future - must be taught to discover their humanity in the natural world around them. Only in quiet sounds will they hear the voice from within. Who will be their teachers, if not you? Please do your utmost to limit the use of ATVs and any and all motorized vehicles in the places where people and critters go to feel alive and healthy and whole.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(56. Menzel) I am deeply concerned about the current efforts to designate greater access for OHV usage. I speak from experience in spending many hours in the backcountry. In that time, I have observed that there will only be environmental destruction from OHV usage without policing and enforcement.</p> <p>Has the DNR determined the miles of trail that a single Conservation Officer can police? Are there adequate staff to meet such a demand?</p> <p>I am an avid birdwatcher, and the implications for waterfowl, and other avian species requiring nesting in wetlands, is cause for extreme concern. We really can't turn back the clock anymore. There is a limit to what is possible and what isn't.</p> <p>Most importantly, an expectation that all trails closed must be marked closed, seems highly destructive to our beautiful state. I encourage you to continue your excellent work on the OHV studies, and to consider all the ramifications of extending further trail usage to OHVs.</p>	<p>Comment noted. 13.3 60.3 22.2</p>
<p>(57. Miller) I own property within Chengwatana and I offer the following comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Chengwatana Proposed Trails Plan map contains obvious errors of fact and planning logic. These include errors in existing trail conditions (paved road shown as non-motorized) and future designation (motorized trail shown with connecting motorized access). Many of these errors have been discussed with DNR staff, but a proposed map incorporating revisions has not been issued. The Proposed Plan public comment process is therefore tainted by inaccurate base information.</li> <li>2. The Chengwatana Proposed Trails Plan map graphic indicates the DNR plans to designate the southern Chengwatana Willard Munger Trail as non-motorized for the purposes of OHV and ATV use. This is obviously misleading to the Public Comment process if in fact the DNR plans to open the Munger to ATV use contingent upon a favorable EIS in connection with the parallel OHV Plan for Pine &amp; Southern</li> </ol>	<p>Comment noted. 52.2; 41.3 30.1</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>Carleton Counties. I thus offer support for the public graphic Chengwatana Proposed Trails Plan indicating partial closure of the Willard Munger to OHV/ATV use, and oppose the misleading concealment by the DNR of its actual planned intentions within the text.</p> <p>3. The Chengwatana Proposed Trails Plan will extend legal ATV access further into the state forest. The DNR inventory process of Chengwatana found many trails indicating current illegal use of the Limited State Forest by ATV. Assuming the DNR will be equally ineffective in controlling future illegal use, I believe that the extension of legal ATV access further into Chengwatana will produce a corresponding extension of illegal ATV use.</p>	13.10
<p>(58. Morgan) I'm writing this concerning your plans for turning our state forest lands into an ATV race track. Don't you understand the damage that will be caused by such activities? The world has far too many humans already that are destroying the commonwealth. If these people are allowed to become motorized morons, you will have given the forests over to a minority of idiots. Our forests are the last of the last of the semi-wild country that we were given by the creator (as degraded as it already is). We should leave these places for the tribes of animals that have no where left to go in our hyper-civilized state of Minnesota, where we allow 8 acres every hour to be destroyed by some human use. The taxpayer has been scammed enough.</p>	Comment noted.
<p>(59. Myers) The condition of our state forests as they have suffered from the impact of ATVs and other OHVs has been a concern of ours. We were pleased to learn about the review and reclassification process laid out in last year's OHV bill. There is no question that the long-term health of our forests depends on the results of this process. We have two general points we expect you are considering in all your forest reviews:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All trails designated as motorized must be designed in a manner that protects natural resources, including the flora and fauna from wetlands to steep hillsides, and that considers public safety and the experience of less intrusive forest visitors.</li> <li>2. Managed use on managed trails presupposes that the DNR will not create a trail system that it is not, in fact, able to manage. We hope you have developed a ratio of the number of miles of motorized trail a conservation officer can reasonably monitor. As members of the vast majority who prefer peace and quiet in the woods, we are concerned about our ability to find areas insulated from the noise and turmoil produced by off-highway vehicles.</li> </ol> <p>Re:Pine County forests, the following should be considered to provide non-motor areas :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The General C.C. Andrews and Chengwatana should be closed because of their small size. If motorized trails are designated, there will be no areas beyond the sound of the machines.</li> <li>2. In St. Croix, no designated motorized trails near the Wild and Scenic River Corridor, nor near Hiking/Walking and Horseback trails.</li> <li>3. In Nemadji, no designated motor trails near the Wild &amp; Scenic River Corridor.</li> </ol>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>54.5</p> <p>13.3; 32.2</p> <p>17.3</p> <p>61.5; 32.3</p> <p>61.1</p>
<p>(60. Nelson) I am a member of the Mn 4-Wheel Drive Association. We are not out to ruin the land we are out to have fun. The ORV account is paying for 1this process. There should be more trails for us.</p>	18.2; 37.3
<p>(61. Newton) I am a member of the MN4WD Association and I would like to see you working with the OHV people. OHV accounts are paying for 1/3 of this process, therefore we would like to see some trails designated for our use.</p>	37.3; 18.2
<p>(62. Norrgard) I present this statement on behalf of American Lands Alliance, a nonprofit conservation organization working to protect and enhance our public land resources as functioning ecosystems for wildlife as well as recreation.</p> <p>First, it is a mandate that our Department of Natural Resources (DNR) protect and maintain environmental quality and ecosystem health. This is a priority above providing recreation, any type of recreation, on our state owned public lands.</p> <p>Managed Use on Managed Trails - I strongly support the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) position for off-road vehicle management as "managed use on managed trails." We must acknowledge that unmanaged off-road vehicle use is one of the greatest threats to the long-term health of our forests. Two points to consider strongly within this policy are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I believe that encompassed in this Policy is the requirement that all motorized trails need to be assessed as to whether they can be designated in a manner that protects natural resources, environmental values (e.g. quiet, landscape character), public safety and the experience of other forest users.</li> <li>2. We must not create a trail system that is not able to be managed adequately with the available staff hours that can be dedicated to it. This means a system mile ratio that matches up to the CO's time to enforce as well as the Trails and Waterways staff time to monitor. Monitoring for impacts should occur on</li> </ol>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>46.3</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>54.5</p> <p>22.3</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response	
<p>a regular basis, perhaps monthly as well as after large rain event.</p>		
<p>While it is understood that there is a place for OHVs on our forests, it is not everywhere. If ATVs and other off road vehicles are allowed to go everywhere, there won't be anywhere to enjoy nature, peace, and quiet.</p>	32.3	
<p>Realistically, for every mile you designate for motorized trail access you are taking away access for the vast majority of forest users who prefer peace and quiet and an escape from the noisy ratrace at home or office. When revved and running OHVs can be heard at great distances of up to and over two miles. Even if a single machine can be heard for only one mile it still has a "soundshed" affecting a great distance – especially when compounded by the average length of the preferred trail ride (Genereux Study) of 33 miles. This can affect all the people and wildlife within an area of 69 square miles (33-mile long X 2-mile wide soundshed, plus a semi-circle on each end with a radius of 1 mile).</p>	32.4	
<p>The amount of overall miles being proposed as OHV routes is also of concern. The State of Wisconsin in total has 1500 OHV trail miles, and here in Pine County alone with existing and new proposed routes we will have a total of 345 miles; we must remember that motorized recreation is a small percentage of overall recreational activities on our state forests.</p>	48.1	
<p>Another concern is that it appears that the DNR is rewarding illegal use by making "unofficial and/or user created" routes into "official" designated trail miles. These forests have been designated as Limited since 2000 and there should be no indication of motorized travel on any but already designated trails. It is a highly questionable process that the DNR is following by mapping and inventorying renegade routes and then making them official.</p>	58.2	
<p>Trails open for use must be able to withstand this type of recreational use. OHV trails should not cross open water (e.g., wetlands, streams, or lakes). All water resources must be protected such as lakes, streams, wetlands, and watersheds for their ecological values. We must also proactively restore spoiled riparian areas that have been damaged. Trails should be located away from sensitive habitats, rare plants and animals, away from nesting, staging, and foraging grounds (especially in spring season), and take into consideration other wildlife habitat needs. Adequate buffers should be addressed and maintained. OHV trails should not be in close proximity to steep slopes (this can be a "draw" for users to go off trail for a "challenge" resulting in irreparable resource damage).</p>	54.5	
<p>Now is the time for the DNR to plan progressively and create a mix of motorized and non-motorized zones within the State Forests. As shown in the above note regarding "soundsheds" the plans we are being presented with for the State Forests are creating unacceptable impacts to the vast majority of users of these forests (e.g., the quiet users). By each trail mile created there is essentially a loss of access, or at least a loss of quality experience, for the walking hunter, wildlife watcher, hiker, skier as well as fishing and camping interests.</p>	32.5	
<p>There are many segments seemingly unconnected to other trails or spur trails that end near lakes and wetlands on many of the maps, leading to the temptation for machines to go "off trail." I suggest that the DNR make corrections to these trail maps where these problems do exist.</p>		
<p>There should be no designated trails along or in close proximity to the St. Croix River (a nationally designated Wild and Scenic River) as well as the Kettle River (a State-designated Wild and Scenic River). There should be no trails along or in close proximity to the St. Croix State Park. The probability of trespass into these protected areas could be high and the DNR would be wise to eliminate the temptation.</p>	57.1	
<p>Willard Munger Trail: The vision behind the creation of this hiking/biking trail should be respected and no motorized OHV access should be considered.</p>		
<p>St. Croix State Forest</p>		
<p>a. The St. Croix State Forest is bordering with Wisconsin and is along the National Wild and Scenic River Corridor (St. Croix River). This river is also a State Canoe and Boating Route. There should be no motorized trails within 1 mile of the river corridor. The noise impacts to the canoe route would disrupt a quality experience for canoeists and other users.</p>	61.5; 61.12	61.6;
<p>b. Please correct any broken segments leading to nowhere as well as spurs ending in wetland areas, this forest is small and contains many wetlands and river corridors; motorized trail designation must proceed cautiously. It is apparent in other parts of the state that if you lead these machines to water they will inevitably go in; the draw to "challenge" the machines must be guarded against in the designation process. Please guard against negative impacts on the Hay Creek Flowage.</p>	30.2	
<p>c. There should be no new designated trails near Hiking/Walking trails as well as Horseback trails.</p>		
<p>d. There should absolutely not be ATVs on Horseback trails; these uses are exclusive and combining will cause safety issues.</p>	61.9	
<p>e. There should be no ATV trails in the dogsled trail section; presently there is no snowmobile access to these trails and since ATVs are a year round use trying to combine these uses will only displace the traditional users and cause risks to safety.</p>		

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>f. Nearly half of this forest is in private ownership, 17,500 acres out of 44,500 in the total forest. Creating 63 miles of trail in this forest will greatly diminish what private property owners can do on their interspersed properties. Those who want a little peace and quiet will find little escape from the roar of ATVs if your plan is approved as it stands. Greater care must be taken in designating these motorized trail miles so as to not impact these interspersed owners.</p>	57.2
<p>g. Please be sure to only designate trails within the capacity of staff time for enforcement as well as monitoring and maintenance. Please cluster trails in a way to better facilitate these management activities. In reviewing the "cuffs and collars" section of the Outdoor News it is already apparent that there is trouble in Conservation Officer District 10 [CO Bruce Lawrence, (Pine City), and CO Wynn in St. Croix State Forest, patrolling for illegal OHV use]. He found several ATVs and OHMs using trails within the "CLOSED" state forest. The forest is closed to all OHVs until further notice. Enforcement action was taken for operating on closed forest roads, carrying passengers on an ATV, and failure to display.</p>	59.4 59.4 59.4
<p>Nemadji State Forest</p>	
<p>a. There should be no designated motorized trails in proximity to the Wild and Scenic River Corridor.</p>	
<p>b. Please correct any broken segments leading to nowhere as well as spurs ending in wetland areas. For example the southwestern segment between Johnson Creek and East Fork Crooked Creek should be closed. Straight north of this broken segment, north of the Northern Pine Trail and west of the Tamarack River is a broken segment that requires closing.</p>	40.2
<p>Directly north of R16W on the map is a trail that shows closed, open, closed, open segmenting with no logic; please close the apparent open segments on this broken trail (very south and east section of forest). Directly west of the north end of the Black Lake Bog SNA (2 sections over) there is a segment that juts into the wetlands area as a spur - this segment should be closed.</p>	13.6; 22.3; 13.9
<p>Please check others and close all unneeded as well as those tempting illegal access to wetlands.</p>	
<p>c. Please provide adequately strong protection for the Black Lake Bog SNA; preferable that no trail be in close proximity to this important area.</p>	61.1
<p>d. Please be sure to only designate trails within the capacity of staff time for enforcement as well as monitoring and maintenance. Please cluster trails in a way to better facilitate these management activities. DNR Conservation Officers (COs) are already short-staffed. There are many vacant CO stations around the state, including four vacant stations in District 10, that includes Pine County. This means that the existing three conservation officers in District 10 must spend a considerable part of their time covering in the vacant areas. How are three COs going to patrol 345 miles of ATV/OHM trails in Pine County (in addition to other duties)?</p>	57.3 57.4 57.3
<p>General C.C. Andrews</p>	2.1
<p>a. This should be a closed forest due to its extreme small size. Any motorized access eliminates the quality of the experience for other forest users. As shown in above soundshed equation there would be no where for a quiet user to go to escape ATV noise. This forest is for the most part only 2 miles in width throughout. An increase to 59 miles of motorized trails within this small forest is unacceptable.</p>	22.3; 13.9 17.1
<p>Chengwatana</p>	
<p>a. This forest should be a "Closed" forest because of its small size and long, thin shape. The greatest width is just over 3 miles and again the "soundshed" from motorized recreation would cause undue impact to the majority of forest users wishing for a natural, quiet experience.</p>	17.2 61.5; 61.6
<p>b. There should be no trails designated near the Wild and Scenic River corridor. There should be no trail miles within close proximity to the St. Croix State Park.</p>	Comment noted.
<p>(63. Norton, MCEA) These comments and the maps, attached and discussed below with these comments, are intended to help you in your consideration of adjustments to the plans between the draft and final versions.</p>	Comments noted.
<p>Comments Specific to the <b>Chengwatana State Forest Draft Designation Plan</b></p>	
<p>A. Based on the GIS data provided to MCEA, there are several good features in the plan. First, the plan clearly tries to create zones within the Chengwatana State Forest that are somewhat distant from roads and proposed designated OHV trails, such that 16% of the state ownership with the Chengwatana State Forest statutory boundary is greater than ½ mile from a road or proposed designated OHV trail. This is still not a large amount of land, and ½ mile is not very distant, but it is fairly good, given the relatively small size of the forest. One such area, in the northwestern area of the forest, appears as though it will provide some significant areas for use by Minnesota citizens who prefer a non-motorized recreational experience. A second such area, in the southern end of the forest along the St. Croix River north of the Snake River</p>	See Sect. II – DNR Response to Comments (all topics)

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>confluence, is particularly appropriate, given the status of the St. Croix River as a National Scenic River.</p> <p>In addition, MCEA recognizes and appreciates that the team appears to have made an effort to cluster proposed designated OHV trails in areas dominated by uplands, rather than wetlands. This is a good idea, and should be repeated in other forests, and by other Area Teams.</p> <p>B. Issues of Concern</p> <p>Despite some clear efforts to craft a good plan in a relatively small and elongated state forest, MCEA has several significant concerns with the plan.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A search of Minnesota’s Natural Heritage Database shows that there are a high number of Natural Heritage Sites, including important biological resources and sensitive species, within 1/2 mile, and an even higher number within 1-mile, of proposed designated OHV trails (see map: Chengwatana State Forest and Natural Heritage Sites). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DNR should remove proposed designated OHV trails, and especially clusters of such trails and any trails that dead-end, from a substantial buffer around all natural heritage sites.</li> <li>• The DNR should remove all proposed designated OHV trails from concentrations of natural heritage sites, such as are found all along the St. Croix River in the Chengwatana State Forest. (31.1)</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. The plan proposes many OHV trails within very short distances of substantial numbers and acreages of Type 2, 6, and 7 wetlands, as well as one large Type 8 wetland (see maps of Chengwatana State Forest and wetlands). The damage to wetlands that will inevitably result from intentional and incidental damage (e.g., renegade riding and unintentional erosion from riding on trails) is easily predictable and the DNR knows from experience to expect such damage will occur when designated OHV trails are aligned in such close proximity to wetlands. Planning for such damage and diminution in the quality of the wetlands in the Chengwatana State Forest is directly contrary to the State Wetland Conservation Plan, and to the Executive Orders of Governors Pawlenty, Ventura, and Carlson, all of which direct the DNR and other state agencies to use their full authorities to preserve, enhance, and restore Minnesota’s wetlands, and to increase them in both quantity and quality. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because of the tendency of OHVs to go off-trail, and the damage caused when they do, the DNR should remove all proposed designated OHV trails from all types of wetlands and from a 1/8 mile (660 feet) buffer around all wetlands.</li> <li>• The specific trail segments that parallel or otherwise come too close to identified wetlands on the attached maps – particularly the maps titled, “Chengwatana State Forest and Types 3, 4, 5, and 8 Wetlands”; “Chengwatana State Forest and Type 2 Wetlands”; “Chengwatana State Forest and Type 6 Wetlands”; and “Chengwatana State Forest and Type 7 Wetlands” – should be removed from the proposal for designation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Clustering the proposed designated OHV trails in the Chengwatana State Forest on the higher ground has resulted in large numbers of trails and trail miles within a 1 mile of the Kettle River and St. Croix River State Canoe Routes, and, to a more limited extent, the Snake River State Canoe Route (see map: Chengwatana State Forest and Canoe Routes). Approximately 14 or more miles of proposed designated OHV trails are within 1 mile of these State Canoe Routes. The noise impact of these OHV trails on the recreational enjoyment of canoeists will be substantial (see Mace, et al., 1999). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed designated OHV trails within 1 mile of State Canoe Routes should be dropped from the proposal and not designated for OHVs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Similarly, the cluster of trails is immediately adjacent to the Kettle and St. Croix Rivers, both of which are listed as state or national Wild and Scenic Rivers (see map: Chengwatana State Forest and Wild and Scenic Rivers). The designation should have real meaning, and should be respected. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed designated OHV trails within a minimum of 1 mile of Wild and Scenic Rivers should be dropped from the proposal and not designated for OHVs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Similarly, the cluster of trails is immediately adjacent to the St. Croix State Park (see map: Chengwatana State Forest and St. Croix State Park). State Parks in other locations have been afforded 2-mile buffers from proposed OHV trails, particularly in light of the fact that the St. Croix State Park boundary substantially follows the rivers already mentioned and designated as State Canoe Routes and state or national Wild &amp; Scenic Rivers.</li> </ol>	

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed designated OHV trails within a 2-mile buffer of State Parks should be dropped from the proposal and not designated for OHVs.</li> </ul> <p>6. The presence of a significant number of campsites (see map: Chengwatana State Forest and Campgrounds), including many “paddle-in only” camp sites along the St. Croix River and in the St. Croix State Park, is yet another reason the same cluster of trails should be dropped from the proposal, and not designated for OHV traffic.</p> <p>C. Chengwatana State Forest Should be Proposed for Reclassification to Closed</p> <p>For all the reasons identified above, and because all the reasons suggested by the DNR Area Team for recommending the Pillsbury State Forest be reclassified to closed likewise apply to the Chengwatana State Forest (instead of a history of horseback riding, the Chengwatana State Forest special history of use revolves around the State Canoe Routes, state and national Wild and Scenic Rivers status, and paddle-in camping), the Chengwatana State Forest should be reclassified to closed.</p> <p><b>XV. Comments Specific to the General C.C. Andrews State Forest Draft Designation Plan</b></p> <p>The General C.C. Andrews State Forest contains a high density of proposed designated OHV trails. It is a very small forest. Soils are weak and sandy, and potential for damage to the forest floor is significant.</p> <p>If the General C.C. Andrews State Forest is to contain a significant number of OHV trail miles, those miles should at least be withdrawn from Natural Heritage Sites identified in the Natural Heritage Database (see map: General G.C. Andrews State Forest and Natural Heritage Sites).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DNR should remove proposed designated OHV trails, and especially clusters of such trails and any trails that dead-end, from a substantial buffer around all natural heritage sites.</li> </ul> <p>The DNR should remove proposed designated OHV trails from close proximity to wetlands (see map: General G.C. Andrews State Forest and Wetlands).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because of the tendency of OHVs to go off-trail, and the damage caused when they do, the DNR should remove all proposed designated OHV trails from all types of wetlands and from a 1/8 mile (660 feet) buffer around all wetlands.</li> <li>• The specific trail segments that parallel or otherwise come too close to identified wetlands on the attached maps – particularly the maps titled, “General C.C. Andrews State Forest and Types 3, 4, 5, and 8 Wetlands” – should be removed from the proposal for designation.</li> </ul> <p>Proposed designated OHV trails clustered around lakes and the sole campground on the General G.C. Andrews State Forest should be dropped from the plan and not designated (see map: General G.C. Andrews State Forest and Campgrounds), as should the approximately 1.7 miles of proposed designated OHV trails within 1 mile of the Kettle River State Canoe Route and State Wild and Scenic River.</p> <p>The detached eastern unit of the General C.C. Andrews State Forest could and should have been recommended to have no designated OHV trails. That would have provided at least one small area of the forest to be used as a control for comparison with the rest of the forest, and provided some minimal non-motorized opportunities for a broad range of recreation on the forest.</p> <p><b>XVI. Comments Specific to the Nemadji State Forest Draft Designation Plan</b></p> <p>A. Positive Elements of the Plan</p> <p>Based on the GIS data provided to MCEA, there are several good features in the plan. First, the plan retains existing zones within the Nemadji State Forest that are distant from roads and proposed designated OHV trails, such that 7% of the state ownership with the Nemadji State Forest statutory boundary remains greater than 1 mile, and an additional 19% is greater than ½ mile, from a road or proposed designated OHV trail. This is not a discernable increase in acreage or percentage, compared with current conditions, but it remains a decent amount of land. The main such area, dominated by Type 8 wetlands, will benefit from recommended closures on the eastern side of the forest.</p> <p>B. Issues of Concern</p> <p>MCEA has several significant concerns with the plan.</p> <p>1. A search of Minnesota’s Natural Heritage Database shows that there are a high number of Natural Heritage Sites, including important biological resources and sensitive species, within 1/2 mile, and an even higher number within 1-mile, of proposed designated OHV trails (see map: Nemadji State Forest and Natural Heritage Sites).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DNR should remove proposed designated OHV trails, and especially clusters of such trails and any trails that dead-end, from a substantial buffer around all natural heritage sites.</li> <li>• The DNR should remove all proposed designated OHV trails from concentrations of natural</li> </ul>	

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>heritage sites. There are approximately six or seven clusters of sites in the Nemadji State Forest (<i>see</i> map).</p> <p>2. The plan proposes many OHV trails within very short distances of substantial numbers and acreages of Types 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and particularly Type 8 wetlands (<i>see</i> maps of Nemadji State Forest and wetlands). The damage to wetlands that will inevitably result from intentional and incidental damage (e.g., renegade riding and unintentional erosion from riding on trails) is easily predictable and the DNR knows from experience to expect such damage will occur when designated OHV trails are aligned in such close proximity to wetlands. Planning for such damage and diminution in the quality of the wetlands in the Nemadji State Forest is directly contrary to the State Wetland Conservation Plan, and to the Executive Orders of Governors Pawlenty, Ventura, and Carlson, all of which direct the DNR and other state agencies to use their full authorities to preserve, enhance, and restore Minnesota's wetlands, and to increase them in both quantity and quality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because of the tendency of OHVs to go off-trail, and the damage caused when they do, the DNR should remove all proposed designated OHV trails from all types of wetlands and from a 1/8 mile (660 feet) buffer around all wetlands.</li> <li>• The specific trail segments that parallel or otherwise come too close to identified wetlands on the attached maps – particularly the maps titled, “Nemadji State Forest and Types 3, 4, 5, and 8 Wetlands”; “Nemadji State Forest and Type 2 Wetlands”; “Nemadji State Forest and Type 3 Wetlands”; “Nemadji State Forest and Type 4 Wetlands”; “Nemadji State Forest and Type 6 Wetlands”; “Nemadji State Forest and Type 7 Wetlands”; and “Nemadji State Forest and Type 8 Wetlands” – should be removed from the proposal for designation.</li> </ul> <p>3. There does not appear to have been any effort made to cluster the proposed designated OHV trails in the Nemadji State Forest, so as to make enforcement easier and more effective or to create areas where non-motorized users can recreate enjoyably. While significant numbers and total lengths of existing trail are recommended not to be designated in the plan, the changes do not create additional areas (particularly areas with substantial uplands) beyond reasonable distances from roads and trails proposed for OHV use designation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DNR should re-examine the trails proposed for designation, and drop segments sufficient to increase the amount of the forest where the majority of recreationists can find opportunities to hunt and otherwise recreate in areas distant from roads and OHV trails.</li> <li>• The DNR should select a percentage of the Nemadji State Forest that it feels should be distant from roads and motorized trails, and make changes in the plan as necessary to reach the target figure.</li> </ul> <p>4. Clusters of trails are located immediately adjacent to designated trout streams in the northern part of the forest. There are 29.15 miles of proposed designated OHV trails within 1/4 mile of designated trout streams in areas of steep topography with significant propensity for erosion. There are an additional 23.75 miles of proposed designated OHV trails within the next quarter-mile of designated trout streams, for a total of 53 miles of proposed designated OHV trails within 1/2 mile of designated trout streams. In addition, there are eight crossings of designated trout streams. (<i>see</i> maps: “Nemadji State Forest and Trout Streams”; “Northern Nemadji State Forest and Trout Streams”; and “Nemadji State Forest and Stream Crossings”). Several trout stream watersheds are particularly hard-hit (<i>see</i> maps: “Nemadji State Forest, Watersheds, and Trout Streams”; and “Northern Nemadji State Forest, Watersheds, and Trout Streams”). The designated trout streams are sensitive, and should not be exposed to this extremely high concentration of OHV trails.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed designated OHV trails within a minimum of 1 mile of designated trout streams should be dropped from the proposal and not designated for OHVs.</li> <li>• The DNR should propose a limit on the number of miles of proposed designated OHV trails that can be tolerated in a single watershed containing designated trout streams.</li> </ul> <p>5. Proposed designated OHV trails clustered around lakes and the sole campground on the Nemadji State Forest should be dropped from the plan and not designated (<i>see</i> map: Nemadji State Forest and Campgrounds).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed designated OHV trails within a 1-mile buffer of the campground should be dropped from the proposal and not designated for OHVs.</li> </ul>	
<p>XVII. Comments Specific to the St. Croix State Forest Draft Designation Plan</p>	

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>A. Positive Elements of the Plan</p> <p>Based on the GIS data provided to MCEA, there are several very good features in the plan. First, the plan does make efforts to buffer the Tamarack River from very high concentrations of OHV trails along its length. It also does not propose for OHV traffic on some of the trails that approach the St. Croix National Scenic River most closely. Except for a few locations, the plan does a good job of keeping proposed designated OHV trails from close proximity with identified Natural Heritage Sites, and clusters of such sites. Finally, it would close trail segments extending along and at several points directly crossing designated trout streams in the south western edge of the forest. (Comment noted)</p> <p>B. Issues of Concern</p> <p>MCEA has several significant concerns with the plan.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A search of Minnesota's Natural Heritage Database shows that there are a number of Natural Heritage Sites, including important biological resources and sensitive species, within 1/2 mile, and an even higher number within 1-mile, of proposed designated OHV trails. In fact, all of the identified Natural Heritage Sites on the forest are within 1 mile of a proposed designated OHV trails (<i>see map: St. Croix State Forest and Natural Heritage Sites</i>). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DNR should remove proposed designated OHV trails, and especially clusters of such trails and any trails that dead-end, from a substantial buffer around all natural heritage sites.</li> <li>• The DNR should remove all proposed designated OHV trails from concentrations of natural heritage sites. There are approximately six or seven clusters of sites in the St. Croix State Forest (<i>see map</i>).</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. The plan proposes many OHV trails within very short distances of substantial numbers and acreages of Types 2, 6, and particularly Types 7 and 8 wetlands (<i>see maps of St. Croix State Forest and wetlands</i>). The damage to wetlands that will inevitably result from intentional and incidental damage (e.g., renegade riding and unintentional erosion from riding on trails) is easily predictable and the DNR knows from experience to expect such damage will occur when designated OHV trails are aligned in such close proximity to wetlands. Planning for such damage and diminution in the quality of the wetlands in the St. Croix State Forest is directly contrary to the State Wetland Conservation Plan, and to the Executive Orders of Governors Pawlenty, Ventura, and Carlson, all of which direct the DNR and other state agencies to use their full authorities to preserve, enhance, and restore Minnesota's wetlands, and to increase them in both quantity and quality. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because of the tendency of OHVs to go off-trail, and the damage caused when they do, the DNR should remove all proposed designated OHV trails from all types of wetlands and from a 1/8 mile (660 feet) buffer around all wetlands.</li> <li>• The specific trail segments that parallel or otherwise come too close to identified wetlands on the attached maps – particularly the maps titled, "St. Croix State Forest and Types 3, 4, 5, and 8 Wetlands"; "St. Croix State Forest and Type 2 Wetlands"; "St. Croix State Forest and Type 6 Wetlands"; "St. Croix State Forest and Type 7 Wetlands"; and "St. Croix State Forest and Type 8 Wetlands" – should be removed from the proposal for designation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. There does not appear to have been any effort made to cluster the proposed designated OHV trails in the St. Croix State Forest. Doing so would make enforcement easier and more effective, and would create areas where non-motorized users can recreate more enjoyably. The proposed plan would leave only 3.6% of the forest in state ownership within the statutory boundary more than 1/2 mile from a road or proposed designated OHV trail. This is utterly insufficient. While significant numbers and total lengths of existing trail are recommended not to be designated in the plan, the changes do not create additional areas (particularly areas with substantial uplands) beyond reasonable distances from roads and trails proposed for OHV use designation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DNR should re-examine the trails proposed for designation, and drop segments sufficient to increase the amount of the forest where the majority of recreationists can find opportunities to hunt and otherwise recreate in areas distant from roads and OHV trails.</li> <li>• The DNR should select a much higher percentage of the St. Croix State Forest that it feels should be distant from roads and motorized trails, and make changes in the plan as necessary to reach the target figure.</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Clusters of trails are located immediately adjacent to the St. Croix River, a National Wild and Scenic River and State Canoe Route (<i>see maps: "St. Croix State Forest and the St. Croix National</i></li> </ol>	

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>Wild and Scenic River"; and "St. Croix State Forest and Canoe Routes"). The designation should have real meaning, and be accorded respect. That respect should be reflected in the changes to the draft plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed designated OHV trails within a minimum of 1 mile of Wild and Scenic Rivers should be dropped from the proposal and not designated for OHVs.</li> </ul> <p>5. Proposed designated OHV trails are located within the Pine County State Game Refuge (see map: St. Croix State Forest and the Pine County State Game Refuge).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed designated OHV trails within any State Game Refuge should be dropped from the proposal and not designated for OHVs.</li> </ul>	
<p>(64. Olson) Access trails into the state forests are limited and many trails were eliminated on the proposed maps. Some trails aren't connected to anything. I/we support these trail plans only if no more trails or their access points are lost or eliminated from your proposed plans..</p>	42.5
<p>(65. Paul) What does "DNR" stand for? Department of "Natural" Resources? This latest proposal is ridiculous...are you guys preserving wildlife or disrupting it? Wow! Good-bye to the nice peaceful walks in the woods. If it wasn't for organizations like Pheasants Forever and Ducks Unlimited, the only available public hunting land would be a small cattail swamp right next to a major highway. If you want to propose something that represents what the DNR stands for, propose to ban all motorized vehicles in our state forests...make people walk and work for their game. Keep up the good work people! Thus, let me ask you again...what does "DNR" stand for? "Destroying Natural Resources."</p>	Comment noted.
<p>(66. Perschmann) I am deeply opposed to any and all appeasement of the ATV – dirtbike – snowmobile – powerboat users and activists. These gas powered devices do great damage to the environment that belongs to all of us and to future generations. These mindless joy riders have got to be stopped. Huge industries sell and promote the use of these machines in their private profit seeking interest. Minnesota has to see through the pressures of the moment.</p>	Comment noted.
<p>(67. Peura) Why isn't there, or when will there be, a route from the Soo Line to the Nemadji via General Andrews? Is the DNR, or have they considered, a trail "Ambassador Program" whereby local clubs ride the trails acting as the eyes and ears for law enforcement? This program works well in Wisconsin. Time has shown when an organization takes responsibility to solve a problem they are generally successful.</p>	50.1; 49.1
<p>(68. Prudhomme) The DNR needs to be able to limit to an absolute minimum degree motorized crossing of wetlands. The hunting exemption is partly what gave us the spider web of trails in our forests. They get used (some of them) year after year. How do you minimize further proliferation?</p> <p>The state needs to be able to provide more enforcement and trail work. This costs money. There should be higher license fees (dedicated) and perhaps a state park trail user fee.</p>	60.2 21.3 18.1
<p>(68. Prudhomme) I have been a long-time user of public lands in Pine County. I have hiked, skied and snowshoed on logging roads, snowmobile trails and in particular have criss-crossed the Nemadji and St. Croix State Forests. Approximately three years ago I served on a state task force concerning ORV/ATV/OHV use on state lands in Pine County. I was one of only 2 persons other than DNR staff who did not use or represent ORV/OHV interests.</p> <p>I have seen snowmobile use rise in the forests with a maze of new trails during this time. I have also seen an even greater rise in the use of ORV/ATV/OHVs. Between the two, the environmental impacts of OHV/ATV/ORV use have been the greatest and most long lasting I have observed. I will list below what impacts I have encountered.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erosion of designated trails, especially in wet or sandy areas; these areas are subjected to severe erosion and trenching and the trails just get deeper and wider. Why does this happen (?): 1) use occurs during wet times of the year; and 2) some users gun their vehicles to get a sloppy ride. Impacts: 1) designated trails become unusable or unsuitable for other uses; 2) the extreme soil disturbance makes it more likely to be taken over by non-native vegetation such as the very invasive garlic mustard which is expanding rapidly in Pine County; and 3) sedimentation of streams, wetlands, and lakes, which in turn affects water quality, fish spawning, and can lead to increased eutrophication.</li> <li>Use occurring on trails designated as No ORV/ATV/OHVs Allowed. Why does this happen (?): 1) the sign designating no use is torn down so riders are not fully aware of the designation; and 2) some do it to spite the rules. Impacts: 1) these designated trails become unusable or unsuitable to intended uses; 2) the extreme soil disturbance makes it more likely to be taken over by non-native vegetation such as the very invasive garlic mustard which is expanding rapidly in Pine County; and 3) use on groomed snowmobile or ski trails tears up the trail and necessitates much higher grooming costs.</li> </ol>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>14.1</p> <p>58.1</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>3. Use occurring on wetlands. Why does this happen (?): 1) some minimal use over wetlands may little impact, but once it becomes a trail is when more lasting impacts occur; and 2) some riders like to go out and go mucking or bogging, tearing up vegetation, and splattering mud; whatever the inherent challenge or joy, there is major impact from this activity. Impacts: 1) the tearing up of wetland vegetation and soils; 2) there is a change in vegetation and erosion of wetlands soils; 3) introduction of invasive non-native species and noxious weeds; and 4) can lead to sedimentation of streams, wetlands, and lakes.</p> <p>4. Public lands become a maze of personal motorized trails. Why does this happen (?): 1) there are more users in recent years, especially during the hunting season to access more and more remote areas (e.g., hunting camps, deer stands, dragging out deer); 2) more users are out there exploring, especially with the advent of consumer GPS units; and 3) increased use by motorized vehicles, especially during the time of year of soft and wet ground can cause damage and death of vegetation and erosion of soils. Impacts: 1) this maze of trails becomes semi-permanent; 2) use invites more use; and 3) wildlife has fewer refuges from people because anyone can motor into the heart of a wild area; in the past, especially during hunting season, very few people got far off the roads, now access is possible everywhere.</p> <p>While I believe that our forest lands should be open to a variety of uses, I believe that all of those uses must be sustainable and not compromise the ecological integrity of the resource. If we use this as a guide there are some solutions to allow some multiple use on public lands.</p> <p>1. The DNR should be empowered to designate ORV/ATV/OHV trails and manage and enforce them in a reasonable and efficient fashion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use should be allowed only on designated and signed trails: 1) this eliminates the confusion over riding on trails designated for no ORV/ATV/OHV use when someone has torn down the sign; if managers do not have this rule they have no way to enforce use when unethical users tear down signs; 2) there can be maps printed and available to back up this system in case someone who doesn't want machines on a trail pulls the sign down; and 3) this eliminates the maze of trails that continues to expand and become more semi-permanent each year.</li> <li>• Use should be limited on some trails to certain times of the year because: 1) the DNR should be allowed to close trails or trail segments if conditions such as moisture or overuse/misuse are creating erosion and siltation.</li> <li>• The DNR should work with other agencies to designate certain gravel pits and abandoned strip mines as places where ORV/ATV/OHV users can go to throw dirt and muck around: 1) these areas are already tremendously disturbed and can continue to be abused; 2) no one has the right to create lasting damage of erosion and siltation on public lands without permit and remediation; and 3) this can be managed in such a way to reduce damage to wetlands, streams, and lakes.</li> </ul> <p>2. The DNR Land Managers should be empowered to protect the resources they manage. In the development of ORV/ATV/OHV trails, DNR land managers must have a strong say in trail location in order to protect soils, waters, and wildlife and plant communities, especially those containing rare, threatened, and endangered species.</p>	<p>60.4</p> <p>53.2</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>27.1</p> <p>27.2</p>
<p>(69. Reynolds) Chengwatana comments: For the record I support reclassifying the Chengwatana State Forest as "Limited." As in all the other state forests in this state there is an established problem with the large percentage of ATV riders who are only interested in riding hard and throwing mud. This DNR is largely responsible for creating this renegade attitude by classifying our state forests as "Managed" even while knowing the damage that would result to our public forests.</p> <p>It is not acceptable to allow any ATV riding within earshot of the St. Croix and Snake Rivers and it is certainly not acceptable to allow riding near the tributaries because there is abundant evidence that enforcement will NOT be able to keep riders out of the "good mud."</p> <p>The trail miles designated MUST be based on what can be effectively enforced. If there is uncertainty then you MUST be conservative. Enough damage has already been done to our forests because the DNR is afraid to stand up for our resources.</p> <p>I support the designation of ONLY as many miles of trail that can realistically be enforced and maintained and NOT ONE MILE MORE! If you can't guarantee enforcement, you should not designate.</p>	<p>17.2</p> <p>32.4; 60.9</p> <p>13.10</p> <p>13.10</p>
<p>(69. Reynolds) General Andrews comments: For the record I support reclassifying the General Andrews State Forest to "Closed." This forest is too small to support motorized recreation without displacing traditional non-motorized recreation. There is no reason to allow motorized recreation to dominate this forest; it is NOT an amusement ride.</p>	<p>17.1</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>(69. Reynolds) Nemadji comments. The designation of 126 miles of unenforceable ATV trails is an outright betrayal of public trust. Haven't you learned anything????</p> <p>For the record I support reclassifying the Nemadji State Forest as "Limited" but I do NOT support turning it into an amusement park. It was a betrayal of public trust for the DNR to classify this state forest as "Managed" in the first place. Anyone could tell that the damage that would follow that classification would be unacceptable. I support the designation of ONLY as many miles of trail that can realistically be enforced &amp; maintained- NOT ONE MILE MORE! If you can't guarantee enforcement, do not designate.</p>	<p>Comment noted. 17.5  13.10</p>
<p>(69. Reynolds) St. Croix comments: I support the reclassification of the St. Croix State Forest to "Limited." Motorized trail designation must also be done in such a way that riders are not able to access wetlands given the widespread "No Boundaries" attitude that the DNR has created with the "Managed" classification that has been so destructive to our state forests.</p> <p>There is no such thing as multiple use when it comes to ATV/dirt bike use. It is dangerous to try to combine them with non-motorized uses. I support the designation of ONLY as many miles of trail that can realistically be enforced and maintained and NOT ONE MILE MORE! If you can't guarantee enforcement then you should not designate.</p>	<p>17.6 54.11  29.1  13.10</p>
<p>(70. Richards) The Pine County Forests have had a long history of motorized use. Please keep the area open for truck use.</p>	<p>37.2; 17.4</p>
<p>(71. Roche) I am still adamantly opposed to any ATV activity on any public land. The proposed ATV trails across most of our forests will destroy fragile flora and stress fauna and people alike.</p> <p>The only half-sensible thing I heard said at the Rutledge meeting was by a concerned citizen. He asked why not designate a quarter corner of the forest to ATVs and keep them away from the majority of peace loving people, plants, and creatures. I believe law enforcement would be easier and cheaper and environmental impact studies also easier and cheaper.</p> <p>I am a deer hunter and can not understand WHY?!, with all the existing ATV trails, ATV hunters can mostly ignore existing laws and trails, just to build or get to their deer stand. Unless handicapped, WHY? can't they just simply, quietly and healthily just WALK!, like myself and thousands of other true hunters.</p> <p>One other interesting thing I learned in Rutledge was the fact that 23 million dollars has been made available for ATV trails and their small minority of owners. On the other side of the scale we humble walking majority have a mere million in comparison to walking trails. I think there is a serious case of flawed majority representation here. Perhaps the Department of Natural Resources could use the 23 million to build an ATV highway alongside Interstate 35. When does this insane destruction end?</p>	<p>Comment noted.  32.5  21.4  18.1  Comment noted. 64.1</p>
<p>(72. Sagen) Chengwatana State Forest: I am a Minnesota resident with a stake in preserving the environment, scenic attractiveness, recreational opportunities for all, and natural resources found in our state forests. Chengwatana should be a closed State Forest. The Forest is extremely small and narrow, just over three miles at the widest point. ATV noise cannot be escaped. Trails should be prohibited near the Wild and Scenic River Corridor (less than two miles), and near St. Croix State Park (less than one mile).</p> <p>I consider inappropriate ATV use to be the wildlands issue of the decade. Unless responsible agencies such as DNR can properly control ATV use, the natural resources, recreational opportunities and basic environment of State forests and other wildlands will be lost for generations.</p> <p>Proper trail management must address a number of concerns:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ATV Destructiveness. I support the DNR position that the appropriate use of OHV in state forests is through "managed use on managed trails." As a resident of Northeastern Minnesota I have considerable first hand experience with the damage done by OHV to wildlands (including damage by trespassers to my own property). The actual and potential damage by ATV surpasses anything we have experienced with snowmobiles in the past several decades. ATV use should be eliminated in proximity to designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, and to wetlands.</li> <li>2. ATV Intrusiveness. I can hear an ATV a mile plus from my home. As a (non-motorized) state forest user, I believe I should have the opportunity to enjoy the forest without constant noise and other intrusion from ATV. ATV use needs to be restricted and separated from other use wherever possible, especially in proximity to other forest attractions.</li> <li>3. Scope of ATV Trails. Responsible ATV users should have the opportunity to use state forests for personal recreation. But state forests have multiple uses and proportionality is important, especially given the destructiveness and intrusiveness of ATV. Current and proposed ATV trails in Pine County alone total 345 miles. Our sister state of Wisconsin currently has 1500 miles of trails total and has no</li> </ol>	<p>Comment noted.  17.2; 61.5; 61.6  Comment noted.  54.11  59.3</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>difficulty attracting visiting trail users to the State. Trail proliferation just increases destructiveness and intrusion. Trail proposals should be monitored and limited in total and within each forest.</p> <p>4. Potential for Irresponsible Use. Many of the problems with the ATV stems from irresponsible use. As with any potentially destructive technology (such as firearms), precautions must be taken to safeguard against abuse. DNR should not plan for ATV trails beyond those for which it has the capacity to manage and control (i.e.) scope and location. Proximity to Wildlife Management Areas, wetlands and protected waterways is an issue, particularly for trail endings and for unconnected segments.</p>	<p>53.3</p> <p>54.11</p>
<p>(72. Sagen) General C.C. Andrews State Forest:General C.C. Andrews should be a closed forest due to its extreme small size. The Forest is extremely small, seldom over two miles in width. There would be no escape from ATV noise. Any increase in trails, and especially an increase to 59 miles of trails would be an affront to other forest users and stakeholders.</p> <p>I consider inappropriate ATV use to be the wildlands issue of the decade. Unless responsible agencies such as DNR can properly control ATV use, the natural resources, recreational opportunities and basic environment of State forests and other wildlands will be lost for generations.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(72. Sagen) Nemadji State Forest, OHV Trail Review and Reclassification</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DNR review and reclassification of Nemadji State Forest with regard to OHV trails. I am a Minnesota resident with a stake in preserving the environment, scenic attractiveness, recreational opportunities for all, and natural resources found in our state forests. I appreciate the efforts DNR has made to preserve these resources while providing for responsible ATV use. I offer the following comments.</p> <p>Comments Specific to Nemadji State Forest</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Trails should be designated only as staff time permits adequate enforcement, and maintenance. Trails should be clustered with enforcement resources in mind.</li> <li>2. Trails should not be allowed near the Wild and Scenic River Corridor. Spurs ending in or near wetland areas, and broken segments with no destination, should be removed. The south-western segment between Johnson Creek and East Fork Crooked Creek should be eliminated. Black Lake Bog should receive adequate protection.</li> </ol>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>54.2</p>
<p>(72. Sagen) St. Croix State Forest, OHV Trail Review and Reclassification</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DNR review and reclassification of St. Croix State Forest with regard to OHV trails. I am a Minnesota resident with a stake in preserving the environment, scenic attractiveness, recreational opportunities for all, and natural resources found in our state forests. I appreciate the efforts DNR has made to preserve these resources while providing for responsible ATV use. I offer the following commentst.</p> <p>Comments Specific to St. Croix State Forest</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Trails should be designated only as staff time permits adequate enforcement, and maintenance. Trails should be clustered with enforcement resources in mind.</li> <li>2. Trails should not be allowed near the Wild and Scenic River Corridor.</li> <li>3. Trails should not be planned in the vicinity of hiking and horseback trails.</li> <li>4. ATV should be prohibited from horseback trails. Safety issues alone dictate this position, in addition to intrusions on trail user enjoyment.</li> </ol>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>54.2</p> <p>61.5</p> <p>59.4</p>
<p>(73. Samp) Please do not roll back hard fought regulations that were implemented last year on ATVs on public land. As an avid grouse hunter, I am appalled at the damage I continually run into while hunting our public lands. You require a permit to cut one Christmas tree, yet will allow any ATV driver to destroy hundreds of trees whenever they go off-trail. Of course, the damage done to trails also speeds erosion and contributes to erosion and poor water quality. As for those who feel they won't be able to get to their favorite hunting spots, get off your a__ and walk. We have a nation reeling from obesity and its effects. This is a prime example why. The only people who should be allowed to go off-road to a hunting spot are those who would qualify for a handicapped-parking permit.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>21.4</p> <p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(74. Schmaus) We agree that your proposal in the draft is correct and the way to handle it [is that] trails should be supervised heavily. Federal, State, and county lands should be designated to trails only to preserve the wild life habitat and solitude.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(75. Schmidt) Why are Type 3, 4, and 5 wetlands closed year-round when they are frozen for at least 4 months out of the year? What will be ruined by riding on them when frozen? The cattails are already dried, frozen, and dead and will regrow from the ponds again next year no matter how much they are run over while frozen.</p>	<p>60.1</p>
<p>(75. Schmidt) Why are we trying to close existing trails and force people to ride more and more on the little bit of trails left causing an overload to those trails. It would be better to try and find clubs, groups, or organizations to upkeep those trails rather than close them. This would help alleviate the overcrowding of the trails that in turn would</p>	<p>20.1</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
mean less wear on them.	
(75. Schmidt) Why doesn't the DNR propose to make more trails multi-use? Wouldn't it be more cost-effective to provide one trail for many uses thereby making it possible for more trails rather than split the trails and have to police them for different uses?	29.1
<p>(76. Sharbo) We believe unmanaged off-road vehicle use is the greatest current threat to the long-term health of our forests and waters. We do NOT support using Minnesota State Forest land for these destructive motorized toys. This hobby should be restricted to private land and supported by user fees.</p> <p>We accept the Department of Natural Resources stated policy for off-road vehicle management as "managed use on managed trails." All proposed motorized trails must be planned from a perspective that protects natural resources and the experience of other forest users. We must not create a trail system that cannot be managed adequately with the resources dedicated to it. This means limiting the trail system to a size that allows enforcement of regulations and monitoring for adverse impacts. This also means protecting some forests (particularly the smaller ones) completely from ORV impact.</p> <p>Each mile designated for motorized trail access destroys access for the vast majority of forest users who prefer peace and quiet. When running, OHVs are audible at great distances, and produce a "soundshed" affecting a large area. Each motorized trail mile created deprives the walking hunter, wildlife watcher, hiker, horseback rider, skier, bicyclist, and camper of peace and quiet. Dual use of trails is simpl[y] not possible with OHVs. Please remember that motorized recreation is a small percentage of the total recreational activity in our state forests.</p> <p>Connector trails are a mistake we do not need to make. They exist at present in the form of widespread ditch riding, and they extend the noise and destruction into every corner of our state. If OHVs are to be tolerated in our state forests, please keep the intrusion localized to a small percentage of forestland.</p> <p>There also should be no designated trails along or in close proximity to any State Park or Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The probability of trespass into these protected areas is high and the DNR would be wise to eliminate that opportunity. Thank you for your consideration.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>54.13</p> <p>29.1</p> <p>50.2</p> <p>61.3</p>
<p>(77. Sheehan) In 1979, our families purchased a tract of land on Willow River in the General Andrews State Forest (Section 36). We've worked hard to establish a community. In our area alone, there are approximately a dozen families with children and animals. The traffic of OHVs has increased in dangerous levels. Too many of them speed thru with a total disregard to other vehicles on the roads, people walking their dogs or children playing. We've bought our own signs to let them know there are children and handicapped persons in the area, all of which they ignore. They go around blind corners at unsafe speeds and race through intersections without looking for traffic, resulting in several close calls. There's been a lot of destruction of the roads themselves. They deliberately make donuts in the roads, particularly in intersections. This past year, we paid \$500 out of our own pockets to repair only some of the damage caused by OHVs on the state fire road leading to our property.</p> <p>We're not suggesting that OHVs be restricted from our area. We're only suggesting the firebreak fronting our properties, and in other forest communities such as ours, not be designated an OHV trail. In our area of the General Andrews Forest, there is a firebreak that runs parallel to the one fronting our property approximately ½ mile north, where there is no community. To control what traffic does come further in, we suggest posted speed limits, stop signs at all intersections, and blind intersections marked.</p> <p>We would also like to see the DNR have more authority to enforce the rules and regulations. We hope in the future more funding would be allocated for more DNR personnel.</p>	<p>19.1</p> <p>16.1</p> <p>13.1</p> <p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(77. Sheehan) We have owned property adjacent to the General Andrews Forest for about 25 years. We own property from the river – north to the forest road about 3.5 acres. We are located off of SFR 316, one mile south of Dago Lake Road in Section 36.</p> <p>With the increase in the number of OHVs on these narrow roads, it has become very dangerous for anyone else wishing to use the trail because of the speed at which they travel up and down the roads, especially in our community. They do not even slow down when one is walking in the road. We have put up signs indicating children and handicapped persons are present, to no avail. They also use these roads all night, well into the early morning hours, at the high speeds even in the total dark woods.</p> <p>In addition, with the increased activity in the forest, we have had much vandalism done to our property. Doors have been forced open, windows broken, and much property destroyed.</p> <p>The OHVs have done considerable damage to the sandy roads. There are deep holes carved into these roads from these vehicles. The holes cause large puddles of standing water that never dry up. Some of these holes are very deep and impassable to regular vehicles and would make it difficult for emergency vehicles to access that area as well. A DNR representative drove and inspected the roads and met with us. He gave us permission to have</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>44.1</p> <p>13.5</p> <p>6.2</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>SFR 316 road (the one with the worst damage) graded at our own expense. Even still, while it is better, the riders that have already been in the forest this season have started to cause erosion and further damage.</p> <p>We have always been good stewards of the land and respected the forest. We have picked up much trash left behind by the OHV users. We only have access during the summer months because we do not have a plowed access to our property. Snowmobiles don't present a problem.</p> <p>We have the following suggestions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are two forest roads that run east-west. One is immediately in front of our property. The road north of us is state land on both sides and no one lives on this road. If a trail is to be designated a main trail, maybe this road could be so marked.</li> <li>2. On the road immediately in front of our property perhaps a Stop Sign could be installed at SFR 316, which intersects with the forest road running parallel to the river to slow down the OHVs. Also, there are many blind curves and these should be marked for the safety of all drivers.</li> </ol> <p>This is a very small forest. The roads go in squares and they do not connect with any of the trails. The damage that is being done is not good for the environment of this forest. To continue letting the OHV users unregulated and unenforceable use of the trails will certainly cause irreparable damage to the forest. If used responsibly, the forest will be there for everyone to enjoy. If the forest is "closed" we would need special permits to access our property, and this is a concern to us also.</p>	<p>6.3</p> <p>6.4</p> <p>45.1</p> <p>45.2</p> <p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(78. Skluzacek) In the Chengwatana State Forest, there seems to be a lot of beaver dam damage to trails. Will there be an open season on trapping them?</p> <p>In the same forest, you have to keep the hunter exemption! There are 12 people in our party, age ranging from 14 years to 82 years. You cannot discriminate against the elderly. Even myself at 44 years of age, I still learn from the seniors. The best way to get out there is from the west side. You need ATVs to get portables out 2+ miles.</p>	<p>1.1</p> <p>21.2</p>
<p>(79. Sorenson) With the proposals, I am concerned that the relatively few ATV owners will have access to trails throughout the parks and forests, leaving no quiet space for those that oppose motorized vehicles. I am concerned that there is no indication for resources for monitoring, maintaining, or repairing these proposed trails. I am concerned of how these proposed trails will be patrolled. In the east-central region we have 3 offices for 4 forests. I am against ATV trails in our state parks and forests.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>59.3</p> <p>22.3</p> <p>13.9</p>
<p>(80. Spencer)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You need to do what is best for the resource not what is best for the user groups. All of these forests have been heavily used by OHVs. Your biggest decisions should be what trails to close.</li> <li>2. The use of 4 X 4 trucks for utility work and forest access is not a problem. I own a 4 X 4 truck. I contribute to the dedicated fund, and I do not want a 4 X 4 recreation area on our state forest land. ORV trails are an inappropriate use of our state land.</li> <li>3. You need to keep traditional users in mind when creating the OHV trail systems (e.g., hunting, fisherman, hikers, campers). They are the silent majority. I have hunted and fished in these forests and my experiences have been changed by careless OHV use in the area.</li> </ol>	<p>7.1</p> <p>37.1</p> <p>59.1</p>
<p>(81. Stevens) I think you have designated too much of the road/trail system as open for ATV use in this plan. I think you should close most of the forest roads and trails to recreational ATV use.</p> <p>ATVs have already wrecked a great deal of the Nemadji State Forest. The addition of over fifty-six miles of motorized roadway in the Nemadji State Forest to ATV access, without providing for adequate resource protection, will lead to massive trail and road bed denigration, and to irreparable harm to fragile wetlands and other surrounding forest areas. Evidence of forest floor damage due to legal and illegal ATV use is already very apparent in the Nemadji. Your expansion of the available road and trail access to these machines and their riders will only promote further and more extensive damage to roads and trails, and road and trailside areas. Without an expanded plan for supervision of high use areas, and other enforcement provisions to control use and misuse of the Nemadji road and trail system, this draft plan represents an abandonment of good forest practice by the Department.</p> <p>Your draft plan is limited to an assessment of the ability of the existing roads and trails to physically withstand ATV use, and reflects briefly on the necessity for the DNR to fully inspect all of the proposed trails for potential problems. The DNR needs to consider other factors in their planning for the ATV user group. The Nemadji State Forest is within two hours drive of Minnesota's major metropolitan area. Because of its proximity to this huge population, it is highly accessible to tremendous numbers of ATV enthusiasts. As this recreational group has increased over the past ten years, so we can expect it to continue to increase. The Nemadji Forest will soon reach saturation by ATV users. During the high use fall and early winter seasons, the forest is already clogged with ATVs. It is impossible for any other user group to enjoy the forest during weekends in August- November.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>6.1; 22.1</p> <p>25.1</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>As the ATV user group grows, how is the Department going to enforce access regulations? How will it afford to supervise and monitor ATV users in the forest? How will it afford to repair the increasing damage to the forest road and trail system? How will it monitor and repair forest floor damage? Your increase in ATV access simply compounds ATV problems in the forest, if you do not address the answers to these questions in your plan.</p>	
<p>By opening up another fifty-six miles of state forest to this group, the DNR is closing huge sections of the forest to other user groups including hikers, bikers, campers, berry pickers, hunters, and trappers. Why do I think this? ATVs, OHVs and their ilk are intrusive vehicles. They are loud, fast moving, and threatening in their movement through the narrow road beds and trails in the forest. Though the ATV users may enjoy the speed and thrills of charging around on these obnoxious machines, other users of the forest are disturbed by them. Though I cannot substantiate it, I would think that most wild animals are not enamored with them either. By opening another portion of the Nemadji to these users, one can assume that the forest will be the weekend retreat for a large number of these vehicles flowing out of the Minneapolis area. It already is for most autumn weekends, but as their population grows, so will grow their usage. The forest will no longer be available to the rest of us at any season of the year.</p>	22.1
<p>I think that it is in the State's interest to limit these vehicles to narrow corridors that traverse the forest but do not enter it. They would be more easily tracked, road rules enforced, and the damage they create would be more easily discovered and repaired. Additional roads and trails will not enhance the experience of these users within the forest. Most of the machines I have seen are traveling much too fast to actually experience any of the natural forest. Most are designed for speeds that limit the rider's experience of the world to a simple blur and the loud hum of an engine. What possible difference could another fifty-six miles of forest access be in this experience? Fifty-six miles of new roads will simply be fifty-six miles more for the Department to repair on a yearly basis, and for other recreationists to avoid.</p>	29.1
<p>The addition of another fifty-six miles of open motorized trail is not based on any real need, but instead on a perceived user need. The plan allows a single forest user group (motorized off road vehicle enthusiasts) to dominate the use of 9300 acres of state forest land. I do not see the public gain in allowing these tiny motorized vehicles to zip and roar around in our forests. Their use in the forest is harmful and ecologically unsound. They are a growing menace to more peaceful forest users. They are intrusive and disturbing the wildlife. We in the larger society need not encourage their use on our public lands. They are unsightly and loud for others in the forest. ATV riders do not need a forest; they need a track, or perhaps a sand box, or maybe a big mud puddle to splash in. From my perspective, they need to learn to enjoy the forest for its natural benefit.</p>	54.4
<p>I note that you do not designate any further non-motorized routes, nor do you propose any more non-motorized trails in the future. In all of the Nemadji, there are only two miles of non-motorized trail. Why is that? This is not equitable. For those of us who enjoy the forest for its potential peace and quiet, your proposal offers nothing.</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I suggest that you review your proposal and delineate any dead end road or trail of less than four miles length as a non-motorized, walking trail [in the Nemadji State Forest]. This would give us some sanctuary from the ATV crowd.</li> <li>2. If this proposal is not acceptable, then I think the Department needs to limit ATV use in the Nemadji State Forest to restricted corridors of travel. I think it would be best if the Department allowed ATVs access to the main road system, just as regular highway vehicles now have access, and close <u>all</u> other trails to motorized use. The current road system is well maintained and easily accessed by road repair vehicles, thus the cost of maintenance would be greatly lessened. These restrictions would give ATVs adequate room to roar around, and give the rest of us parts of our forest to enjoy.</li> </ol>	Comment noted.
<p>The Department should also discourage the use of ATVs by hunters in off-road areas during hunting seasons. I cannot believe that a hunter cannot walk a mile or two to get to their stand and/or do their hunting. Current law allows much too much off road access by ATVs to the forest, for no better reason than the hunters are lazy and out of shape. This is not a good reason. Perhaps the DNR should run a hunter shape-up, physical fitness program in the early autumn. That would be money well spent.</p>	32.2
<p>In conclusion, I am happy to see that the DNR is proposing to limit use of the roads and trails by ATVs in the Nemadji State Forest. It is something that needs to be done. Now you need to revise your plan and restrict their use further, so that Minnesota's non-motorized sportsmen and women can enjoy the forest too. You also need to develop a management plan that incorporates more than road maintenance. Your current plan does not discuss enforcement of the regulations. You need to find ways to patrol the forest during weekends, and enforce ATV regulations. Today there is no meaningful enforcement of ATV rules. Adding more road and trail access is only going to make the problem worse.</p>	57.8 27.3 21.5 22.1
(82. Swanson) Keep the woods open. Hunting, fishing, trucks, ATVs, motorcycles, logging roads. We pay for	Comment noted.

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
them. Don't get greedy.	
(83. Thibodeau) I understand that the Nemadji forest is a relaxing area to off road. I'm a family man of 3 children who seeks a relaxing 4-wheeling atmosphere. This would be a great place to keep open.	37.1
<p>(84. Thurler) General Andrews State Forest: I have owned property at the south edge of the General Andrews for the past 29 years. I would like to write about a few of my problems with the plan.</p> <p>A. The DNR in those 29 years has done nothing to help us with the road problems created when they had someone harvesting the trees. The roads were left in terrible condition and when we requested help from the DNR we received none. Some of us have taken this problem on and tried to do the repairs.</p> <p>B. One of your representatives at a meeting he had with some of us last year even mentioned that you could close the road so the 12 families with summer homes couldn't get to our properties.</p> <p>C. In the last two years I know of two people who have been hit by ATVs and I have almost had head-on accidents myself. They have no respect and have even given some of the landowners hell for being on THEIR TRAILS. I do believe we pay a lot more in taxes for property than they pay for tabs for their ATVs and Dirt Bikes.</p> <p>D. What really bothers me most is, you people give them the right to do just about anything they want to do in regards of where they drive in the forest.</p> <p>E. The least you can do is patrol the trails once in a while to really see what some of these idiots are doing to the trails. Doughnuts at every corner that wash out when it rains. In my 29 years here, I have seen the DNR exactly 3 times and one of those was the meeting I talked about before.</p> <p>F. I called the Moose Lake Office when the trails first were opened up and suggested that the least they could do was post signs on Dago Lake Road that there are cars and trucks on the roads. To date this hasn't been done.</p> <p>My wife and myself are not against people enjoying the forest as we do, but unless something is not done about controlling those who show no respect, we can't support your plan..</p>	<p>Comment noted. 6.5</p> <p>40.1</p> <p>44.1</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>13.5</p> <p>6.5</p> <p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(85. Trout) Friends of forest protection and preservation won a fierce battle in the Minnesota legislature in 2003 that enabled the Minnesota DNR to develop the rule that trails are to be closed unless posted open. The "closed unless posted open" rule is the only rule that has any chance of being enforced.</p> <p>Watchdogs, and those within the DNR Division of Forestry, must keep the pressure on to maintain the strong legislative advances to forest preservation made last year in the Minnesota Legislature. Somewhere, somehow we must stand up to the omnipotent threat to our air, land, water and finite natural resources (crude oil) that is wrought by the internal combustion engine and aggressive tread on the forest floor and wetlands. In addition there is the assault on all of our senses and then the extreme negative impact on wildlife.</p> <p>With the risks to the forest and the decreased pleasurable experience for the vast majority of the people who enjoy the forest, it is simply unconscionable to allow more and more recreational vehicles and OHV vehicles of all sorts to travel over more and more terrain. This is where those charged with the responsibility of our forests need to keep things in proper balance and perspective.</p> <p>We must take a stand against the rape of the environment with recreational vehicles. Yes, a few manufacturers and merchants will benefit from additional OHV trails in the forest but at what price to the rest of society? A solid case can be made for paying a price to the environment for the benefits of farming, manufacturing, extraction, logging and shelter. The case collapses when applied to recreation. Hunters and trappers have managed for centuries without ATVs.</p> <p>I work and recreate as a volunteer nearly every week in state, county and Federal forests (Chippewa, Cass County, Hubbard County and Clearwater County) building the North Country National Scenic Trail. Each week it is a pleasure to be in the forests, but also, each week, I hear, see, smell and feel (yes the ground shakes when they roar by and "catch air") the presence of OHV vehicles and it is not pleasant.</p> <p>I find it appalling and astonishing that one of my motivations for writing this letter is to support the concept of keeping mudder truck playgrounds and motorized challenge hills out of our state forests. Why should this debate even be on the table?</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>54.14</p>
<p>(86. Vacinek) Regarding the Chengwatana, I do not believe that there are enough trails designated to ride. I believe if more trails aren't provided that riders looking for a place to ride will go where they're not supposed to be. I wish you would look at our "98" draft [system plan] where we had a plan to open trails and also designated a wide area of forest to foot traffic only; it's located in the SE corner will be easy to enforce because of one inlet and outlet.</p> <p>My main concern is being able to use my ATV to hunt and access my property. Without access to the forest, the vast majority of it will see no use I know because not only have I hunted the Cheng for 28 years, I am out there</p>	42.6; 32.1

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>every weekend from August to December. While deer hunting I see nobody unless they drive past with their ATV or one of the hunting party.</p> <p>Absolutely our forest should be enjoyed by all Minnesotans. Whether we walk or ride, there should be a place for both and a place where both together can exist. From what I saw and heard April 14<sup>th</sup> unless you get a trail system that can access deep into the forest many people, many family traditions just may fade. I personally won't let that happen to my family. I will adapt somehow.</p> <p>But why not use all the forest; just think what would happen for the many that enjoys getting off the beaten path are forced to hunt closer to the roads. The influx of hunter would provide unsafe conditions by overcrowding. Only the physically fit in theory would be able to enjoy the far reaches of our forest. The forest is for all whether young or old, not just a few. In the past our family's grandparents farmed the now swampy areas; they gained access with horse and wagon to tractors to 3-wheelers and to now 4-wheelers. ATVs are not the reason we deserve access; it is just another form we use now.</p> <p>I have no quick fix but as in the past I am always willing to help. My goal is to keep hunting opportunities. I could not imagine life without hunting within our wonderful state forest.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>21.8</p>
<p>(87. Van Ryzin) Is this an appropriate avenue to submit a comment on the proposed expansion of ORV use in the state forests? If so, I am a long-time hiker and camper and enjoy very much the opportunity for recreational activities in Minnesota state forests. However, my more recent trips have been negatively impacted by ORV use, both in terms of noise as well as environmental destruction. I believe that a great deal of the existing ORV use in the Minnesota state forests is illegal and I myself have felt physically threatened many times by ORV users.</p> <p>I STRONGLY OPPOSE any expansion of ORV use in the Minnesota state forests while the current lawless activity continues. Also, I STRONGLY SUPPORT additional funds for enforcement of existing ORV laws to prevent our beautiful wild areas from becoming increasingly damaged and degraded.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(88. Walters) I believe the trail designations are a step in the right direction. I agree with many of the comments made at the forum. (Walters) I just want to point out that most problems that were brought up – riding in some yards, riding over/around barriers – are already illegal. We need to enforce laws that we already have. I do agree with many of the people [at the public meeting] that wanted hiking trails. My frustration is that all of these trails have been funded with my money. I believe we should have walking trails but lets have a fee for those people.</p> <p>We should have a hiker/biker trail fee. Then there would be a fund set aside to make trails for the hiker/bikers. Why should the ATV, fishing, hunting, etc. licenses pay for the hiker/biker trails.</p> <p>As I stated at the Rutledge meeting, I believe the problems that we encounter with ATVs are the same problems we had with snowmobiles. There were many snowmobiles and no trails. The ATVs now outnumber snowmobiles in the state. We need to do the same that we did with snowmobiles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regulate the ATVs.</li> <li>2. Develop a trail system (currently there is 742 miles of trails for ATVs, according to the DNR site), snowmobiles have over 21,000 miles of trails.</li> <li>3. Enforce the laws.</li> </ol> <p>I do believe there are plenty of areas for hiking and walking trails, but I do not want to fund them.</p>	<p>13.1; 18.1</p> <p>18.1</p> <p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(89. Wannebo) Chengwatana Forest. With about 60 miles of renegade undesignated trails in the Chengwatana, it is obvious that you have an ATV management problem in this area. But that is no reason to jeopardize the potential expansion of the St. Croix State Park to its south. The public demand for parks will continue to outstrip the demand for ATV use. In 20-years Minnesota's growing population will require more parkland, while the ATV demand will have leveled off. Therefore, there should be no ATV trails planned for the north end of the forest; that would be the natural area of expansion for the St. Croix State Park.</p> <p>Since the advent of ATVs, I have been very concerned about their devastating impacts on our state's rich and vital water resources. It is vital that OHV trails stay a mile or more away from the St. Croix and Snake Rivers. I believe there is a Wild and Scenic River Corridor that needs to be respected in this forest.</p> <p>Last, the use of the Willard Munger Trail for ATV use is a travesty and is disrespectful to the many people with vision who created this hiking/biking trail. When it comes to mixing motorized and non-motorized use, there is no such thing as multi-use. They are like oil and water. Given these factors, motorized recreation should be limited to the Forest Road, which allows adequate access for hunters.</p>	<p>61.2</p> <p>61.7</p> <p>30.1</p> <p>54.6</p>
<p>(89. Wannebo) General Andrews Forest. I think it is important to provide quiet places in our state forests and to protect the quality of life of those people who live adjacent to those forests.</p> <p>In this case, I think the General C.C. Andrews forest should be classified as Closed. Because of its small acreage, 7,500 acres, approving 35 miles of ATV trails in this forest would make it a de facto ATV park, displacing</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>17.1</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>all other user groups. I think the 17 miles of forest roads allows adequate access for most hunters. To meet the growing ATV demand, the public will be better served by focusing the disbursement of ATV use in the much larger Nemadji Forest. Closing the General Andrews would also allow the DNR to focus enforcement, monitoring and maintenance in the larger forest without having to dip into the General Andrews.</p> <p>I realize that you have a hard decision to make. But please keep in mind that you also have to provide areas for the majority of Minnesotans who want to escape the intrusions of motorized recreation.</p>	32.2
<p>(89. Wannebo) Nemadji Forest. By-in-large, I think your team has done a good job of the reclassification for the Nemadji. But, unlike the forest plans presented in other parts of the state, noticeable missing from your plan is an enforcement plan. With the huge swamp areas and numerous streams in the Nemadji, and with the well-documented fact that ATVers will seek out these areas for "mudding," I think designating 126 miles of ATV trails without an enforcement plan is irresponsible.</p> <p>DNR Conservation Officers (COs) are already short-staffed. There are many vacant CO stations around the state, including four vacant stations in District 10, that includes Pine County. This means that the existing three conservation officers in District 10 must spend a considerable part of their time covering in the vacant areas. How are three COs going to patrol 345 miles of ATV/OHM trails in Pine County?</p> <p>Without adequate enforcement, you can expect a continuation of serious OHV violations in Pine County, like those that are reflected in recent Cuffs and Collars CO Reports.</p> <p>The trail maps are hard to read on the computer, but it appears that a number of the proposed trails end in or near wetlands. This will encourage ATV wetland violations and damage to public resources. I call your attention to the proposed trails between Johnson Creek and East Fork of Crooked Creek. These trails should be closed. You will find similar problems west of the Tamarack River and on the Northern Pine Trail. So, while I support managed trails for ATVs, I think the miles of trail proposed for the Nemadji exceed the enforcement capability which is amplified by the wetlands and creeks in the forest.</p>	13.6 13.9 13.9 60.7 13.3
<p>(89. Wannebo) St. Croix Forest.</p> <p>The St. Croix is a very small forest with a lot of water. I am concerned that you propose a number of trails that end in the area of wetlands. When a couple of ATVs get in a wetland or stream for just a couple of hours, they can (and will) negatively impact the water quality down stream, as well as damage the habitat that is part of a delicate ecosystem. Please consider the negative impacts on the Hay Creek Flowage and the entire watershed.</p> <p>With the number of miles you are proposing near wetlands [in the St. Croix State Forest], exotic plant species will find a foothold in these areas. In 10-15 years, these noxious plants will be spread to the other riding areas in Pine County because of the fairly consistent ATV user group that frequents the four state forests in Pine County.</p> <p>Creating more trails will not stop ATVers from seeking out water "challenges." Don't kid yourself. Nearly half of this forest is in private ownership, 17,500 acres out of 44,500 in the total forest. Creating 63 miles of trail in this forest will greatly diminish what private property owners can do on their interspersed properties. Those who want a little peace and quiet will find little escape from the roar of ATVs if your plan is approved as it stands. People bought land in or near state forests to have a little extra room to roam, and to enjoy the buffer the state forest provides from the intensive use of others. Now, you are changing the rules by inflicting the noise, dust, and displacement of others that comes with intensive ATV use.</p> <p>CO Lawrence of that area is doing a good job. In the past couple of weeks he has caught several ATVers who were riding in the "closed" area. I think he needs help in this forest before you dedicated any more trails here. Before you can expect law and order, you have to get control of the ATV crowd. This will take more CO time and more COs...something that the DNR does not have in its budget.</p> <p>ATV trails should not be shared or near hiking trails or horse trails. The Tamarack Horsecamp and 22 miles of horse trails is an asset to the area. In talks with Minnesota Trail Riders Association (MTRA) members, I'm told that they once thought they could share the trails with ATVs. But, with the new renegade attitude among ATVers, MTRA folks no longer finds it safe or fun to ride where ATVs ride. They are concerned about safety as well as about the loss of the quiet ride.</p> <p>I do not believe that you have provided an adequate study of the Native American history and sites of this area. Much of this area is holy ground to Native Americans. The DNR is showing great disrespect to past, present, and future Native Americans by making this area more motorized than it already is.</p> <p>I do not feel that you have sought "balance" in this forest, given the fact that motorized recreationists are a minority of our state's population. To make nearly half (63 miles) of this forest's 146 miles of inventoried roads and trails open to ATVs goes way beyond balance. A more conservative approach is needed in the St. Croix.</p>	60.8 15.1 19.2 40.2 13.9 59.4 5.1 32.2
<p>(90. Waters) I note with enthusiasm your inclusion of non-motorized trails and the closure of previously made</p>	

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>trails. These are welcome new developments.</p> <p>My main concern here is with the General Andrews State Forest. I believe that this tiny state forest (only a bit more than one/thousandth of total state forest land) should not be subjected to OHV use. It is so small that one OHV trail would impact other uses of the forest, and a network as proposed would soon turn this forest into an OHV "park," unusable for quiet uses such as hiking, bird walks, and enjoying other natural values of a woodland. Furthermore, when ATV or OHM riders enter this forest there would be little more for them to do but course around for a while and then go back out. I would think the riders themselves would prefer that the same costs and efforts would be better spent on longer trails that connect with others for a better experience.</p> <p>I think this forest, as well as others of similar size scattered around the state, should be in the "Closed" category.</p> <p>On the other hand, these small forests could be developed with non-motorized trails to create a large system of non-motorized opportunity, similar in size to the snowmobile and OHV systems. It would be a wonderful addition to the outdoor recreation opportunities in our state forests, serving a huge proportion of our citizens, actually greatly larger than the OHV riders. When implemented, such a non-motorized system should be made visible with available guidebooks and maps and publicized widely. In the larger state forests, a system of "zoning" could be installed, like that which Brad Moore mentioned [at the public meeting], to separate OHV and quiet activities, given the needed authority is legislated..</p>	<p>Comment noted. 17.1</p> <p>32.6</p> <p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>(91. Weier) I am dismayed to see that more and more trails are being considered for motorized use.</p> <p>As a hiker and backpacker, I've seen first hand in several states, the devastation that unrestricted use by ATVs and 4 X 4s on public lands has created. Finding a true wilderness experience with no nagging man-made background noise is increasingly hard to come by.</p> <p>I support the use of only those trails posted as open on state forests. Please move slowly and cautiously in opening up trails and wetlands to motorized use. The damage to the land, waterways and wildlife will be difficult or impossible to undo.</p>	<p>Comment noted. 59.3</p> <p>22.2</p>
<p>(92. Wolforth) My concerns are the difficulties of enforcing and implementing the plan. From the people on the panel, I heard several statements regarding the changing nature of the plan, the difficulties in making it complete and accurate, and even once completed, the impossibility of it staying static. From the citizens, I heard a desire to work with the plan, but questioned how they could without complete information. This seems to be a gap waiting to be filled by education.</p> <p>I suggest an educational component be added to the legislation. This would include funding for outreach and education on everything from what the new regulations are, to whom to call when you think someone is violating them. This funding could be direct to an existing government agency or offered as grants to independent non-profits. Some could simply be outsourced to private companies.</p> <p>My second suggestion is to add specific language [to the plan] about the ongoing management of the forests. How will trails change? How often will they be reviewed? What about disaster situations such as a "blow-down"? How can citizen input be used? Et-cetera.</p>	<p>41.3</p> <p>10.1</p> <p>8.2</p>
<p>(93. Woodmansee) The DNR and Division of Forestry mission statements show how they are there to provide recreational opportunities for all and how the State Forests are a renewable resource that are for USING. In fact, in Minnesota we have many other types of land that are already set aside for preservation purposes, many to the most pristine levels. We have State Parks, National Parks, County Parks, County Park Reserves, National Wilderness, State Wildlife Management Areas, National Wildlife Refuges, National Waterfowl Production Areas, State Scientific and Natural Areas, and various city parks, nature centers and preserves, bird and wildflower sanctuaries, and more. With all these other areas already set aside for preservation there is no reason to not let the tax paying public who owns the State Forests use the State Forests.</p> <p>At the public meeting at Rutledge the majority who spoke against motorized trails in the four forests were hunters who wanted a non-motorized hunting experience. There are over 1500 Wildlife Management Areas statewide, hunters can and should go to these WMAs to get the non-motorized hunting experience they are after.</p> <p>Many people claimed at the Rutledge meeting that motorized trails are "exploding" in the state forests. The truth is there are actually fewer motorized trails today than there were in the past. For example, a late 60s Minnesota Nemadji trail map, when compared to the current motorized trails inventory, clearly shows there were more motorized trails just a few decades ago than there are today.</p> <p>No matter when or where motorized trails were mapped in these four forests, they were all pretty much originally created for the purposes of timber extraction. This means that realistically the existing trails were really created for the purpose of access to the forests. If these trails are all about access then they need to be left open</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>46.2</p>

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
<p>for all to use, not just ATVs and dirtbikes but ORVs as well, so that all people have equal access. All trails currently proposed open should remain open, and too many have been proposed closed to motorized use.</p>	21.8
<p>These four forests historically became State Forests because the land could not sustain farming. Taking it one step farther, General C.C. Andrews for example is a manmade forest having been artificially planted. In a way these are kind of throw away lands and hence are not forests that should be fussed about so much and kept from being used for motorized recreation, especially ORVs.</p>	25.2
<p>At the Rutledge meeting many complained about noise pollution from off-highway motorized recreation. When a truck is driving off road it is in first or second gear and is in four-wheel drive or even low range. This means that trucks when off road are traveling at very low speeds, speeds a fraction of what ATVs and dirtbikes travel at. These slow speeds translate into a non-revved motor and lower RPMs at the wheels. This means that trucks do not tear things up as much as people think and that trucks are also quieter than people think. In fact, at the Virginia OHV park the truck areas are all along the perimeter of the park to act as a sound buffer because trucks are the quietest of the three off-road motorized user groups. There is no reason why ORVs should be left out of the trail designations in these four forests. And remember, ORVs are paying thirty-five percent of the cost of the inventory and designation process, it is wrong that ORVs should be paying but not receiving any of the final product.</p>	46.4
<p>It was my understanding from meetings with the commissioner's office that part of this process is to identify where loops can be completed. I see from the proposed designations that there are dead ends that have been left open and I can only assume that attempts will be made to complete these spurs to make a flowing, satisfying trail system.</p>	46.4
<p><b>Forest Specific Comments - St. Croix State Forest:</b></p>	
<p>The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is just that, scenic, and access for all people, no matter their form of recreation, should be allowed so that all people are able to take in any and all of that beautiful scenery. I don't own a boat, I don't own a horse, and with three herniated disks in my back hiking to see this stunning scenery is out of the question for me, my only hope for access is motorized. From the proposed designation maps I see that the small forest road loop that goes all the way back to Boulder Campground on Rock Lake was closed; as an avid camper who with a family of four and two dogs cannot pack light, this is another area I would like to be able to access with my pick-up; please re-open this portion of forest road. There are many trails that have been left open for ATV use that ORVs have been sharing with ATVs for years; ORVs should be able to continue to share them.</p>	19.6; 18.2 32.4
<p><b>Nemadji State Forest:</b></p>	
<p>For the same reasons as stated above trails that give access to the beautiful scenery of The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway should stay open to all modes of motorized travel. Again, many trails left open for ATV use can and should be open to ORV use as well. The dead end trail between Johnson Creek and East Fork Crooked Creek and the dead end trail north of the Northern Pine Trail west of the Tamarack River should remain open because they go to important deer hunting grounds. Please make sure the Gandy Dancer, which is a hard good trail on a railroad grade, remains open for all motorized use for access to the beautiful scenery of the Black Lake Bog.</p>	48.1; 25.3 42.1
<p><b>Chengwatana State Forest:</b></p>	
<p>The gravel pit, near that kind of impromptu campground, would be a great place to take an ORV, and there is a neat trail that ORVs should be able to use that goes from the campground along the Munger over a bridge onto a hillside that overlooks a scenic wetland. Again, many trails left open for ATV use can and should be open to ORV use as well. The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, the Kettle River, and the Snake River are very scenic and there should be motorized trails allowing access to view this pretty scenery. Just because a forest is small does not mean that it shouldn't have motorized trails in it.</p>	61.9; 42.7; 37.2 57.7; 37.2; 30.4
<p><b>General C.C. Andrews State Forest:</b></p>	
<p>The Blueberry Hill area, and all of the trails south of Dago Lake Road and west of I-35 open to ORV use. There needs to be a trail that leads from the Willow River State Campground with a bridge over the Willow River that then goes to the Blueberry Hill area and all the trails there so that one doesn't have to drive through town all the time. Again, many trails left open for ATV use ORVs can and should be able to use as well, such as the trails in the northwest part of square 36, in the southern half of square 31, in the southeast corner of square 36, and the southeast corner of square 30. Just because a forest is small does not mean that it shouldn't have motorized trails in it, and noise impact cannot be a good reasoning for closing motorized trails since Interstate 35 cuts right through the middle of this forest and escaping motorized noises is impossible. Because this forest has some really great terrain for sustainable and rewarding ORV trails, the DNR should look into creating new trails here.</p>	37.4; 37.2; 61.5 37.5; 37.2; 37.6 Comment noted.
<p>(94. Wright) Re: Pine County Forests. These forests have a long history of motorized use. Forests are for using, other areas are set aside for preservation. Work with the truck people after spring closures have been lifted to</p>	37.2 46.2

Comments [Excerpted]	Response
define where OHV trails should be.	37.3
<p>(95. Young) Pine County Trail re-classification. Forest Trails Inventory - I feel the Forest trails inventory project has the potential to be very beneficial to the state of Minnesota. If it is taken from the perspective of actually developing an ATV trail system. The Nemadji State Forest has a lot of potential for trails, and with the Munger running through, it could possibly be a launch point to travel by ATV to other areas of the state by ATV. I would like to add that winter riding opportunities are crucial to the success of a trail system. I would strongly urge that most ATV trails in the area be considered for winter riding. I know of several clubs and small groups that take many Minnesota ATV owners to Wisconsin for winter rides. It is unfortunate to see all of the potential revenue going out of state.</p> <p>While I see many potential benefits of the trails inventory, I have some concerns as well. Particularly, regarding the recommendations that have been made in the Nemadji State Forest. Please bear in mind that once there is an adequate system of designated trails in place, that you should have fewer problems with ATVs riding in inappropriate places. If there is a problem after the trails are in place, that doesn't mean that all ATVs are out disregarding the law. Rather, it is typically a few ignorant people. If large numbers of people are doing it, the other message it sends is that perhaps the trail system may not be adequate or is missing something. That being said, I am not defending those who would choose to break the law. Rather, I am suggesting that we try to be proactive by providing adequate legal riding opportunities, as most people want to obey the law.</p> <p>I am concerned about some specific things I've seen on the maps as well. Large areas with many listed historical use ATV trails recommended to be closed surrounding specific well known loops leaving no legal access to a loop or trail that is recommended to be open. It simply does not count if you have no access to it. I am certainly not recommending closing those sections. Rather, clarifying the importance to keep some of the other trails open. If bridges will help, I know that Washington Ramsey County Wheelers ATV club has several sections of Grant-In-Aid ATV trails in Nemadji State Forest already and would be willing to take on more bridge building tasks. I know for a fact that that particular club would be willing to provide the volunteer power necessary to re-route trails to avoid sensitive areas. (42.1)</p> <p>I've noticed some Grant-in-Aid projects that exist that don't even show up on the inventory. That troubles me greatly.</p> <p>I've heard some terms such as "Trail Density" and "Old Growth Forest" as reasons for closing existing ATV trails. "Trail Density" is simply not a valid excuse for closing trails. As for Old Growth, that is pretty much a fallacy. As far as I can tell, the entire Forest has been logged at one time or another. If a particular area has older trees in it than the rest of that particular Forest, it has not made itself particularly evident to me. Furthermore, if I am wrong about that and it truly is Old Growth and there is already history of ATV activity through the area, then obviously the Old Growth trees have not been adversely affected by the ATV traffic. Otherwise they would not exist. Therefore, it is not a valid reason to prevent designating specific trails through the area.</p> <p>As the DNR continues working with the trails inventory in other forests and as you review Nemadji, the sport of ATV riding is surprisingly similar to hiking, bicycling, and canoeing. I personally have used all of these modes of travel and I enjoy them all very much. The spirit of the sport is adventure. It's going somewhere you haven't been before. It's you and the forest in any kind of weather, from 90 degree summer days, getting caught in a sudden thunderstorm, through a blizzard, or even when it is -20 degrees in January. All-terrain vehicle owners are looking for the same adventure, just a different mode of travel.</p>	<p>52.3; 63.1</p> <p>54.9</p> <p>42.1</p> <p>52.1</p> <p>42.4</p> <p>29.3</p>

# Final Forest Classification & Motor Route Designation Plans for the Chengwatana, Gen. C.C. Andrews, Nemadji, and St. Croix State Forests

## DNR Response to Comments Submitted on the Draft Pine County Plans

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources presented Draft Forest Classification & Motor Route Designation Plans ('Draft Plans') for the Chengwatana, General C.C. Andrews, Nemadji, and St. Croix State Forests for public review and comment on February 2, 2004. The comment period ended April 30, 2004.

Comments were received from 95 persons, individually or on behalf of organized interest groups. Comments took the form of letters, public meeting comment forms, and e-mails. The DNR has developed the following responses to the comments submitted on the Draft Plans. They are incorporated by reference into the Final Off-Highway Vehicle Trail Designation Plans for the Chengwatana, General C.C. Andrews, Nemadji, and St. Croix State Forests.

The responses have been organized by topic (below) and are cross-referenced where possible. Reviewers should refer back to the previous section for the source of the comment which prompted each response.

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|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Beaver Dams</li> <li>2. Black Lake Bog SNA</li> <li>3. Campgrounds</li> <li>4. Conflict of Interest</li> <li>5. Cultural Resources</li> <li>6. Current Management Conditions</li> <li>7. Designation Priorities</li> <li>8. Draft Plan – General Comments</li> <li>9. Ecological Effects Assessment Paper</li> <li>10. Education</li> <li>11. Emergency Access</li> <li>12. Enforcement – Costs</li> <li>13. Enforcement – General</li> <li>14. Erosion</li> <li>15. Exotic Plants</li> <li>16. Firebreaks</li> <li>17. Forest Classification</li> <li>18. Funding Issues</li> <li>19. General OHV Ops &amp; Related Conditions</li> <li>20. Grant in Aid Trails &amp; Clubs</li> <li>21. Hunter Access / Hunting Exemption</li> <li>22. Implementation</li> <li>23. Law Violations</li> <li>24. Legislation 2004</li> <li>25. Levels of Use / Need for Trails</li> <li>26. Maintenance Costs</li> <li>27. Management Solutions</li> <li>28. McCormick Lake</li> <li>29. Multiple Use Management</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30. Munger State Trail East / Gandy Dancer State Trail</li> <li>31. Natural Heritage Sites</li> <li>32. Non-Motor Recreational Opportunities and Noise-Related Impacts</li> <li>33. OHV-Related Impacts</li> <li>34. OHV Laws – 2002 &amp; 2003</li> <li>35. OHV Registrations and Ridership</li> <li>36. OHVs – Definitions</li> <li>37. ORVs</li> <li>38. Other Costs</li> <li>39. Physical Suitability</li> <li>40. Private Property Issues</li> <li>41. Process-related Issues</li> <li>42. Proposed Trail Closures / Designations</li> <li>43. Rapid Envir. Assessment Checklist</li> <li>44. Safety Issues</li> <li>45. Signage</li> <li>46. State Forest Management</li> <li>47. Statewide Trail System</li> <li>48. Total Trail Miles</li> <li>49. Trail Ambassador Program</li> <li>50. Trail Connections</li> <li>51. Trail Density</li> <li>52. Trail Inventory</li> <li>53. Trail Proliferation</li> <li>54. Trail System Features</li> <li>55. Treadway Hardening</li> <li>56. Trespass</li> <li>57. Unconnected &amp; Dead-End Trails</li> </ol> |
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|-----|--|-----|---|
| 58. | Unpermitted Use of Trails                | 61. | Wild & Scenic River Corridors, State Parks, & Wildlife Management Areas |
| 59. | User Conflict / Incompatible Uses        | 62. | Willow River Area   |
| 60. | Wetlands / Riparian Areas / Trout Waters | 63. | Winter Riding   |
|     |  | 64. | Miscellaneous   |

### 1. Beaver Dams

Response 1.1. The current framework of the beaver trapping season will remain the same [Nov. 1-May 15, with no (unlimited) daily, season or possession limit]. Nuisance beaver situations have been, and will continue to be, dealt with through trapping/shooting of nuisance animals and dam removals.

### 2. Black Lake Bog Scientific and Natural Area

Response 2.1. There are no recreational trails in the Black Lake Bog Scientific and Natural Area (SNA). The rules and regulations governing SNAs prohibit the development of (any type of) recreational trails.

Response 2.2. Viewing access to the Black Lake Bog SNA is provided by the minimum maintenance forest road designation along the Gandy Dancer State Trail.

### 3. Campgrounds

Response 3.1. The site is bounded to the west (across Zalesky/Stanton Lake) by an existing forest road with Interstate 35 located to the east. Motorized traffic on the forest road and the interstate highway generate considerable noise. OHVs do not contribute significantly to this level of noise or disturbance. See Response 27.10

The Willow River Forest Campground is accessed by (a second) forest road and there are no OHV trails leading into or out of this facility. The boundary is signed with "Special Use Area" signs that exclude ATVs and OHMs from entry. In addition, the forest's limited classification restricts OHV operation to only those forest roads and trails that are posted open to that use. Historically, DNR staff have not received complaints about motorized traffic occurring on the forest road located across the lake.

Response 3.2. The DNR does not use an exclusion-zone type "buffer" around this campground. Rather, non-designated routes were evaluated individually in terms of their impact on sensitive natural resources.

Gafvert Campground (noted in the comment) is one of five campgrounds administered by DNR in Pine County; it is the only one where ATV/OHM traffic is allowed to enter or leave the "Special Use Area." This campground is also the trailhead for designated hiking trails, which remain closed to motorized traffic.

The DNR acknowledges that State Forest Campgrounds do not always provide "solitude". Quiet is sometimes compromised by the existing network of designated forest roads and trails, timber harvest, hunting, etc. occurring within the forest. Individuals seeking a quiet camping experience can use the Tamarack Horse Camp, Boulder Campground, Snake River Campground, or the Willow River Campground. Of particular note, the Boulder Campground (located in the St. Croix State Forest) requires that ATV and OHM riders trailer their vehicles approximately three (3) miles to the nearest trailhead to proceed from that point. Also see Response 27.10

### 4. Conflict of Interest

Response 4.1. Minnesota State Employees are subject to strict ethical standards. These standards are based upon statutory direction supported by administrative agency rules that govern many aspects of personal and professional employee behavior. The DNR's Office of Professional Standards, an arm of the Commissioner's Office, is charged with maintaining these standards within DNR, and with conducting investigations if necessary to ensure compliance.

DNR employees are not explicitly prohibited from membership in enthusiast or advocacy organizations. However, they are expected to act appropriately and objectively, at all times and on behalf of the department, in their capacity

as professional land managers. Ethical guidelines suggest that employees may wish to recuse themselves (as state employees) from certain situations with the potential for a conflict of interest. Public complaints or allegations of bias or wrongdoing should be directed to the Commissioner or to the DNR Ethics Officer.

## **5. Cultural Resources**

Response 5.1. Review of current and proposed trail alignments for potential effects to cultural resources was done by checking trail locations against the statewide inventory of cultural resources. Additional information about cultural resources known to be located in proximity to trail alignments was obtained from knowledgeable Area Staff. The Sandstone Team considered this Information regarding preferred trail and forest road alignments.

## **6. Current Management Condition**

Response 6.1. Currently, ATVs are allowed to ride anywhere in the forest, except on trails posted closed. Upon full implementation of the Final Plan, OHVs will be restricted to routes posted 'open'. All of the routes listed on the maps offered for public review showed evidence of 'ongoing motorized use'. Once trails are designated, funds from the dedicated accounts may be used to maintain or improve trail conditions.

Response 6.2. State Forest Road 316 is a minimum maintenance road; it is in fair to poor condition. The road was originally constructed as a firebreak access so that DNR Firefighters have access to stop fires that may spread into or out of the forest. As a minimum maintenance road, it is maintained only for this purpose. The road can be closed seasonally or for emergency or temporary closures. Should such a closure take place, the DNR Division of Forestry is authorized to issue "Special Use Permits" to landowners to enable them to access their private properties.

Response 6.3. No response necessary.

Response 6.4. No response necessary.

Response 6.5. The DNR recently approved an upgrade of the Dago Lake Road through the State Park Road Account; this road provides recreational access into the General C.C. Andrews State Forest. This project will take place once approvals are secured. The Department also installed a stop sign at the south end of this road to slow motorized users; the road's beginning will be signed as a Minimum Maintenance Road (MMR) by the plan implementation date of December 31, 2006.

The road in question is a State Forest MMR that did provide access for harvest-related activity; it is in fair to poor condition. It was originally constructed as a firebreak-type of access. As a minimum maintenance road, it is kept in a condition suitable for the intended purpose. The road can be seasonally or temporarily closed. Should such a closure take place, the DNR Division of Forestry is authorized to issue "Special Use Permits" to landowners to enable them to access their private properties.

Response 6.6. No response necessary.

Response 6.7. DNR agrees that the General C.C. Andrews State Forest is relatively small in comparison to other state forests. The potential for damage to the forest's soils is real. It will be important to keep motorized users on the trails where damage can be minimized and maintained. Off-trail ATV travel, which is permissible under the hunting and trapping exception, is a potential area of concern. Such travel is restricted to the fall months and areas can be posted closed if necessary.

The Department has not developed objective standards to assess trail density considerations. However, the Team's recommendations do result in a net reduction in overall trail mileage available to OHV users. Since many of the routes retaining an undesignated status are located in the northeastern part of the forest, relative trail density will effectively be reduced in that area of the forest under the Final Plan.

Response 6.8. To the degree that damage is occurring on state-administered forest lands, the ongoing forest reclassification and motor route designation process was specifically enacted by the 2003 OHV Legislature to address this problem.

The northern 2/3 of the Foot Hills State Forest is classified as limited effective December 31, 2005; until this time OHVs are permitted to operate on forest roads and trails unless posted closed. The lower 1/3 (south of County road 70) is already classified as limited, thus OHV travel is restricted to designated trails that are posted open (subject to the hunting exception provision in Minnesota Rules part 6100.1950, subpart 7). Once the limited classification becomes effective, all OHV travel in the Foot Hills State Forest will be restricted to designated trails that are posted open (subject to legal exceptions).

## **7. Designation Priorities**

Response 7.1. The proposed recommendations reflect consideration of a variety of factors, including need for public access, physical suitability of trails, and the potential for adverse environmental effects. The total mileage of forest roads and trails currently being used by OHVs is reduced under all four of the (Draft and) Final Plans.

Response 7.2. DNR has not established any pre-ordained, minimum or maximum trail mileage targets for the current route designation exercise. Each forest is being evaluated individually for its potential to sustain new designations of roads and trails pursuant to the existing route inventory. Opportunities to establish non-motorized recreational trails are also being identified. Future recreational opportunities, for example creating logical connections to dead-end trails, will be considered as warranted.

The proposed trail designations reflect the Sandstone Team's assessment of how best to provide forest access under DNR's "managed use on managed trails" policy. DNR will not propose routes for designation that cannot sustain OHV use with proper management. Effective enforcement will discourage unauthorized OHV use and the unlawful development of spur trails.

## **8. Draft Plan – General Comments**

Response 8.1. Information gathered during the public review period was used to refine preliminary recommendations and improve final plan direction.

Response 8.2. The forest Classification & Route Designation Plans are not intended to be comprehensive trail management documents. Site-level detail will be applied during plan implementation consistent with the department's interdisciplinary review process, which will examine provisions for regular trail monitoring and enforcement. The DNR will soon complete revised trail development guidelines that will cover many of the issues identified in the comment; see Response 10.1

## **9. Ecological Effects Assessment Paper**

Response 9.1. The 2002 report drafted by the DNR Ecological Services Division was made available to the Sandstone Team. Another report examining the effects of linear recreation routes that was authored by the Division of Trails and Waterways (*The Ecological Effects of Linear Recreation Routes*, 11/13/03) is also made available for team use. Neither report has been officially reviewed or adopted by the department.

Clearly additional research is warranted on this important topic, particularly research specific to Minnesota soils, geography, vegetation and fauna. These types of baseline studies should be accompanied by continuing applied research that documents the success (or lack thereof) of various management approaches. Research in this area is ongoing and DNR will consider the results as warranted.

## **10. Education**

Response 10.1. The DNR agrees that rider education is a critical part of field implementation. In order to improve rider behavior and boost compliance with OHV rules and regulations, the DNR contracted with a private consulting

firm to develop an integrated media marketing and communications campaign. This multi-year "Responsible Rider" campaign is intended to educate riders about the environmental impacts associated with poor riding behavior, and to encourage especially younger riders to ride safely and responsibly. This effort is funded by annual appropriations from the dedicated OHV accounts.

Related legislation provides \$225,000 annually for grants to county law enforcement agencies for OHV enforcement and rider education activities. The counties can, in turn, issue grants to local or municipal enforcement agencies within the county. This ongoing effort is funded by appropriations from the dedicated OHV accounts. The DNR Division of Enforcement administers the program and funding applications are available at [www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us).

The DNR Division of Enforcement administers an ATV Safety Training & Rider Education Program for youth ages 12-15 who wish to operate an ATV larger than 90cc on public lands or waters. Students can enroll in the course, which features both an independent study and riding component, for a \$15 fee by contacting the DNR Safety Training Program via the DNR's website. Over 340 volunteer instructors and over 1,000 students were certified in just the first six months of the revised program. OHV training programs are funded both by student registration fees and by appropriations from the dedicated OHV accounts.

Meanwhile, updated trail design and development guidelines for (all types of) recreational trails are currently being prepared in order to provide DNR staff and volunteers with a comprehensive technical reference on site-level trail design, construction, maintenance and management techniques. These updated field guidelines will replace previous DNR manuals and should be available in mid-2006. Emphasis is placed on environmentally sustainable trail siting and design, on innovative and naturalistic construction, and on effective maintenance and monitoring approaches. This effort is funded by appropriations from the OHV accounts, and by a federal trails funding grant.

## **11. Emergency Access**

Response 11.1. The DNR agrees that trails that meet accepted development standards can help facilitate emergency access and speed the emergency evacuation of injured riders.

## **12. Enforcement – Costs**

Response 12.1. The Final Plans identify previously non-designated forest trails that can sustain OHV operation. Those trails that cannot sustain motorized use will remain non-designated and thus closed to motorized use under the limited forest classification. Trail designation represents an improvement over the current condition. Regarding higher enforcement costs, the length of the OHV season is a primary factor; costs are higher because the OHV season is longer. The DNR agrees that OHV-related enforcement is essential for both public safety and resource protection.

Response 12.2. The comment that DNR's field enforcement stations have not been fully staffed in recent years is correct. Still, enforcement efforts have been increased substantially in recent years, especially in those areas experiencing heavy OHV demand, resource damage and/or visitor conflict. In FY 2003, the DNR Division of Enforcement spent 15,624 hours on OHV enforcement. In FY 2004, 14,600 hours were spent on enforcement. In FY 2005 16,200 hrs were spent, and in FY 2006 plans call for 18,200 hours to be spent on OHV enforcement. This upward trend is seen as continuing commensurate with increased numbers of riders and registered machines. Increasingly, enforcement efforts can be targeted to designated OHV trails and riding areas as this forest classification and route designation process continues.

Response 12.3. Comment noted.

Response 12.4. Comment noted.

Response 12.5. In a general sense, as the number of people accessing the forest increases, the incidence of unlawful behavior also increases. Increasing the number and visibility of Conservation Officers is a deterrent. Public information and rider education campaigns can also help reduce undesirable behaviors and illegal activity.

Response 12.6. The Department has taken steps to fill a number of Conservation Officer vacancies in recent years. Officer Training Academies have been held in each of the past three years. This remains a high priority for the Department. Rather than using a "formula- or ratio-based" strategy to allocate enforcement resources, the DNR Enforcement Division engages in an annual work planning exercise in order to improve statewide effectiveness.

Response 12.7. The Final Plans identify those forest roads and trails that provide sustainable forest access. Final Plan implementation depends upon a number of factors, including adequate enforcement. DNR will not operate additional trail miles without sufficient resources, and may close trails in the future should they prove unsustainable. Enforcement needs and costs are just one aspect of this determination.

Response 12.8. This proposal examines pre-existing routes showing evidence of motorized use. New trail construction and designation is not proposed, nor are previous trail designations being rescinded. Because many existing routes in the Pine County State Forests will retain their non-designated status, future motorized use will, in effect, be substantially reduced and more concentrated than was previously the case. This should improve enforcement efficiency and effectiveness.

### **13. Enforcement – General**

Response 13.1. The DNR agrees that achieving "managed use on managed trails" requires effective law enforcement. Laws and regulations governing OHV use are subject to scrutiny and open to periodic revision.

The Legislature examines the issue of enforcement funding every biennial budget cycle. In 2003, in addition to regular/base appropriations from the OHV accounts, DNR Enforcement was appropriated \$700,000 each year for OHV enforcement (approximately \$500,000 of this is associated with civil citation expenses), \$130,000 each year for the ATV safety training program expenses, and \$225,000 each year for administering grants to county law enforcement agencies for OHV enforcement and public education activities. Since 2003, these appropriations have grown substantially. See Response 12.2.

Response 13.2. A criminal misdemeanor violation conviction can cost up to \$500.00. There is also a potential for additional costs if restitution charges to cover damage are assessed to the perpetrator. DNR Enforcement officers will aggressively pursue violators and will prosecute to the fullest extent of the law.

Response 13.3. See Response 12.6 regarding using a formula to distribute Conservation Officers. Success in enforcing the State's OHV laws and regulations rests not only with Conservation Officers, but also with other DNR staff, and the public. An informed, involved citizenry is critical to a recreational user system that works.

Response 13.4. DNR agrees with the comment. This situation has occurred because some of the timber just off of the U.S. Park Service property was recently cut on the south side of this trail (at the time of the comment). Once that site regenerates, it will be difficult for riders to leave the trail. DNR will close any incidental trails that follow skid roads to ensure that this skid trail does not become an illegal access route.

Response 13.5. It is correct that use levels in the General C.C. Andrews State Forest can be high, especially on holiday weekends. Proximity to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area is a contributing factor, with open spring riding conditions also playing a role. Motorized users, in particular, have used the Dago Lake day use area extensively, both legally and illegally. Accidents and significant damage have occurred.

DNR Conservation Officers have increased patrols in this forest. A number of citations and warnings have been issued. Still, much work remains. Implementation of the proposed trail designations, coupled with appropriate

signage, monitoring, and enforcement, should improve the situation. A concerted and sustained enforcement effort by DNR officers and active self-policing by the public will be required over a period of time in the General C.C. Andrews State Forest.

Pine County Sheriff's Deputies have recently been trained by Conservation Officers on enforcement of recreational vehicle laws, particularly as they relate to county roads and private property trespass. Civil citation authority is another tool now available to enforcement officers. Pine County Deputies have been actively using their training and the new civil citation tool. Criminal citations can now be issued in addition to civil penalties and restitution.

Response 13.6. Enforcement plans are necessary before trails become operational (i.e., signed, necessary improvements, seasonal closures). The DNR can close roads or trails, temporarily or on a permanent basis, should they prove unsustainable over time. Permanent closure of roads may be done via Commissioner's Order, but permanent trail closures would require a second public process much like the current process.

Response 13.7. Comment noted. See Response 13.3.

Response 13.8. DNR acknowledges that OHV management in the Chengwatana State Forest has historically been ineffective. However, with full implementation of the limited classification effective December 31, 2006, forest users will have a much better sense for where they are permitted to ride (i.e., maps, signs). These new OHV-related regulations will be strictly enforced.

Response 13.9. Staffing for DNR Enforcement District 10 is continuously evaluated. New officers were assigned in 2004. They were stationed in the Mille Lacs Lake Area to provide increased enforcement on Lake Mille Lacs. This provides relief for officers stationed in Pine County from their Lake Mille Lacs-based duties, thus allowing officers in Pine City, Hinckley, and Willow River to have more time to spend on focusing on violations in Pine County, including the four Pine County state forests.

Response 13.10. The proposed trail designations for the Chengwatana State Forest will result in a net reduction in available trail miles for ATVs and OHMs. Coupled with improved signing, monitoring, and enforcement, the DNR believes the Final Plan will result in improved management and more effective monitoring of the Chengwatana State Forest. See Response 13.3.

## **14. Erosion**

Response 14.1. All types of trail use, motorized or non-motorized, can result in soil erosion and/or surface water sedimentation. Appropriate measures will be taken to minimize soil erosion or to prevent offsite soil movement. Trail design, construction and maintenance techniques will be used to keep soil displacement to a minimum to protect natural waters from sedimentation impacts. Some trail surfaces will be hardened and/or reshaped to protect against soil disturbance. See Response 15.1 regarding opportunities for the establishment of invasive plant species.

Response 14.2. All types of trail use, motorized or non-motorized, can result in soil erosion and/or surface water sedimentation. Appropriate measures will be taken to minimize soil erosion or to prevent offsite soil movement.

Response 14.3. Erosion is a natural process. DNR is committed to applying the appropriate mix of erosion-control methods to the proposed trails as necessary to keep erosion within acceptable limits.

## **15. Exotic or Invasive Plants**

Response 15.1. Vegetative effects from recreational trail use typically fall into two categories: 1) vegetative "trampling" or acute destruction, and 2) introduction of non-native or "exotic" plant species. Either can, if uncontrolled, lead to serious ecosystem disruption over a localized or even extended area. The introduction of non-native species is perhaps the most recognized and disruptive type of chronic vegetative impact. The mode of human introduction can take a variety of forms through the transportation of timber, firewood, or via contaminated

(with seeds and spores) clothing, shoes, boots, backpacks, bicycles or vehicle tires. Other common means of transport for exotic plant species include wind, rain, surface waters, wildfire, birds, and animals.

The potential introduction and/or spread of invasive exotic plant species is considered an unavoidable impact of motorized forest access. However, it is unlikely that the proposed designations of existing forest trails (already subject to varying degrees of motorized use) will lead to the introduction of species not already found in the forest. Still, the DNR will actively seek to prevent the introduction of exotic plant species and control and eradicate known infestations using chemical and mechanical methods.

Targeted information and education programs will also be used to modify behaviors that impact the forest. Off-road and off-trail vehicle use, especially in sensitive areas, will be curtailed. Improved regulatory signing and gating should also help keep riders out of sensitive areas. Decommissioning roads and trails not needed for management or recreational access, especially where disturbance is likely, will also help to restore native vegetative cover. Motorized use and access will be strictly controlled. Given these measures, the potential for the introduction and spread of exotic plant species is reduced with the proposed set of trail designations from the current condition.

## **16. Firebreaks**

Response 16.1. A stop sign was placed at the southern end of this minimum maintenance road. This was done to slow motorized users. The beginning of this road (where it leaves Dago Lake Road) will be signed as minimum maintenance road consistent with implementation of the final plan and its recommendations.

## **17. Forest Classification**

Response 17.1. The DNR does not propose any change to the currently 'limited' forest classification for the General C.C. Andrews State Forest. This forest has a long-established history of motorized use and the DNR interdisciplinary team concluded that the current classification is appropriate. Under the limited classification, OHVs may travel only on forest roads and trails that are posted "open." Unsigned routes are closed to motorized use, except pursuant to hunting/trapping exceptions (See MS 84.926.)

Response 17.2. The DNR does not propose any change to the currently 'limited' forest classification for the Chengwatana State Forest. This forest has a long-established history of motorized use and the DNR interdisciplinary team concluded that the current classification is appropriate. Under the limited classification, OHVs may travel only on forest roads and trails that are posted "open." Unsigned routes are closed to motorized use, except pursuant to hunting/trapping exceptions (See MS 84.926.)

Response 17.3. See Responses 17.1 and 17.2. Also see the discussion under Topic 32, Non-Motorized Recreational Opportunities and Noise-related Impacts.

Response 17.4. The DNR does not propose to change the current 'limited' classification of any of the four Pine County State Forests as a result of this review. All four forests will retain their current classification as limited. Under the limited classification, OHVs may only travel on forest roads and trails posted "open" for their use.

Response 17.5. The Nemadji State Forest has been classified as limited since January 2000, as have the Chengwatana, General C.C. Andrews, and St. Croix State Forests. No reclassification is proposed at this time.

Response 17.6. The St. Croix State Forest has been classified as "limited" since January 1, 2000, as have the Chengwatana, General C.C. Andrews, and Nemadji State Forests. No reclassification is proposed or contemplated.

## **18. Funding Issues**

Response 18.1. The DNR concurs that except for cross-country skiers, most non-motorized trail users do not directly support management activities involving trail construction, maintenance, or enforcement. While hunters and anglers pay license fees that support their activity, and others (e.g., equestrians) have volunteered substantial time and

dollars for specific projects or purposes, non-motor trails remain under funded. The State's General Fund appropriations, historically used to support non-motorized trail recreation, have declined precipitously in recent years, even as costs have increased. General Fund dollars are no longer sufficient to expand, or even maintain, the state's current system of non-motorized trails.

At the same time, the growth of user-dedicated funding accounts, coupled with grant-in-aid volunteer support, have enabled motorized trail users (and x-country skiers) to move forward with trail development, while keeping pace with growing trail maintenance and enforcement needs. Although most motorized trails remain "open" to non-motor users, the DNR agrees that more must be done to secure a stable, reliable and equitable source of funding for (exclusively) non-motorized recreational trails.

Off-highway vehicle funds are used for OHV trail planning, design, construction, maintenance, and management. They are also used to fund field enforcement activities. The Off-Highway Vehicle Damage Account, which is administered by the DNR Division of Trails and Waterways, See Response 14.1.

Response 18.2. The DNR acknowledges the role of the ORV dedicated funding account in supporting the current exercise, and the lack of quality ORV trail opportunities presented in the Draft and Final Plans for the Pine County forests. However, since the public comment period ended, the DNR Field Team has revisited this issue. The Final Plan contains a recommendation that several areas of the Nemadji State Forest be re-evaluated, subsequent to this planning process, for possible ORV trail development opportunities. Because these routes do not now exist, they cannot be designated under this process, nor do they enjoy the same general exemption from EQB Rule requirements as do pre-existing routes designated via this process. Future ORV trails in the Nemadji will be subject to standard interdisciplinary DNR review, and possibly project Environmental Review pursuant to MN Rules, Chapt. 4410.4300.

## **19. General OHV Operation & Related Conditions**

Response 19.1. The DNR agrees that greater emphasis is needed to properly manage OHV use in the General C.C. Andrews State Forest. Conservation Officers have increased patrols in this forest and a number of citations and warnings have been issued. Still much work remains to be done. Implementation of the proposed trail designations, coupled with improved trail signage, monitoring, and enforcement, should improve the situation. A concerted and sustained enforcement effort by DNR officers, and active self-policing by the public, will be needed to improve conditions in the General C.C. Andrews State Forest.

Response 19.2. The future operation of OHVs in the four Pine County State Forests will be restricted to forest roads and designated trails that are posted "open" for OHV use. Vehicle challenge or scramble opportunities will not be provided within the state forests, but are available at facilities like the Iron Range OHV Recreation Area in Gilbert, and at other private and publicly funded motor sports facilities (e.g., Appleton OHV Park).

Response 19.3. There are locations in the Chengwatana State Forest that have experienced severe rutting. These locations have received heavy motorized use and very little maintenance. Many of these locations will no longer be open to motor use under the limited forest classification.

Response 19.4. It is important that wetland impacts be avoided or minimized. The 2004 Legislature has refined and clarified the state's policy relative to OHV operation in wetlands; see Minnesota Statutes 84.773, subdivision 1-3. The DNR will implement and enforce this new policy direction.

Response 19.5. Many former routes will revegetate over a two or three-year time period. This is expected to be the case for many of the non-designated routes proposed to retain this status in the four Pine County state forests.

Response 19.6. Comment noted.

Response 19.7. The DNR notes that the preponderance of state land riding is utilitarian in nature (e.g., hunting, trapping, collecting) and that (purely) recreational trail riders represent only a fraction of all riders. Some portion of this latter demographic group finds the described behavior appropriate or “fun.” The DNR does not view scramble areas, steep hill climbs, or vehicle challenge areas as appropriate or sustainable uses of state forest lands. Specialized facilities, such as the Iron Range OHV Recreation Area near Gilbert, MN, are provided for this purpose. Grant-in-aid funding may also be available to develop such facilities on non-state properties (e.g., Appleton OHV Park).

According to MN Rules Chap. 6100.1950, it is unlawful to operate an OHV on state forest lands on a designated non-motorized trail, in areas posted as closed to motor use, on or over the beds of public waters, or on forest lands in a manner that “causes erosion, rutting, or injures, damages or destroys trees or growing crops.” No person may construct an unauthorized permanent trail on state forest lands. Riders must also comply with all applicable laws and rules, including careless, reckless and exhibitiv operation statutes. Willful violators will be cited and prosecuted.

Response 19.8. The DNR acknowledges that all recreational trail use carries with it the potential for unintended environmental effects. With proper trail alignment, design, construction and regular maintenance, the DNR believes that it can sustainably provide for OHV use of state forest lands. This involves the use of stable, naturally shaped engaging and narrow OHV trails that encourage relatively slow travel and highlight natural features. Hardened trail treads will be employed where native soils cannot resist displacement and sustainable crossings will be used to minimize disturbance to surface water, wetlands, and other sensitive natural features. Regular trail monitoring, maintenance and field enforcement are intended to help ensure that trails do not fall into disrepair or generate unacceptable social or environmental impacts.

Response 19.9. The Genereuxs’ (2001) concluded that length of trail is an important aspect of OHV trail planning. When trail length is limited to 100 miles or less, they reported the average length of a “great ride” for ATVerS was 26-41 miles; for OHMs it was 18-35 miles; for ORVs it was 12-20 miles. The median length of a “great ride” for all three types of OHVs was reported to be “less than 25 miles” generally on multi-use trails (P.78).” Based on this research, they concluded, “trails of a modest length (can) still satisfy almost all riders”.

The DNR agrees that motorized trail uses typically do cover more miles per day than non-motorized recreationists, and that this factor is important to trail planning. Other important factors (for riders) include trail quality, scenery, skill level, permitted uses, location and destinations, trail connections, topography, support facilities and amenities.

Response 19.10. DNR believes that it is possible to implement sustainable OHV trail systems in the State Forests that provide quality recreational opportunities. The Department is committed to providing public motor access to Minnesota’s forest Lands.

## **20. Grant-in-Aid Trails & Clubs**

Response 20.1. The current exercise is designed to ensure adequate motorized access to the four Pine County state forests. Undesignated forest access routes showing evidence of motorized use were inventoried and assessed as to whether such use could be sustained. Based upon the Team’s evaluation of these routes, none were proposed for future use as grant-in-aid trails. The DNR does, however, expect additional trail opportunities to be identified in the future and welcomes grant-in-aid applications from snowmobile and OHV trail groups and their sponsors.

Response 20.2. See Response 20.1.

Response 20.3. The working relationship between the DNR and the grant-in-aid clubs has been excellent. The successful implementation and management of the trail system greatly depends upon the support and assistance of GIA volunteers. The final OHV trail maps for the Nemadji State Forest were produced with the assistance of the GIA clubs. As a result, the maps are much more complete and accurate than would otherwise have been possible.

Response 20.4. The DNR takes very seriously both its fiscal responsibility for grant-in-aid trails assistance programs, and its obligation to respond to the growing, changing needs of Minnesota's recreational trail users. This has prompted the department to re-examine the current system of grants, with an eye towards improved accountability and program performance.

As the Legislative Auditor noted in 2003, increased oversight is needed to ensure that dedicated trail recreation funding is not used for programs or purposes other than the purposes for which registrants paid it. The department supports these findings and will work with legislators, trail clubs and local government sponsors to enact reforms that make the grant-in-aid trails program more accountable and responsive to both state and local club needs.

## **21. Hunter Access /Hunting Exception**

Response 21.1. The most recent modifications to the hunting/trapping exceptions (MN Stat. Chapt. 84.926) were made by the 2005 legislature. A summary of the statute can be found in Appendix C of both the Nemadji and St. Croix Final Plans.

It is recognized that many riders operate their vehicles with little or no damage to natural resources while exercising their legitimate access rights under the hunting exception. It should also be noted that effective December 31, 2006 all four of the Pine county forest will be classified as 'limited', which means that only those routes posted 'open' will be legal to ride, except for ATV and HLV use of non-designated routes pursuant to the hunting/trapping exceptions. ATVs may also travel off-trail for big-game retrieval subject to prohibitions on rutting and damage to vegetation.

Response 21.2. The most recent modifications to the hunting/trapping exceptions (MN Stat. Chapt. 84.926) were made by the 2005 legislature. A summary of the statute can be found in Appendix C of both the Nemadji and St. Croix Final Plans.

Response 21.3. It is unlawful to operate an ATV on forest lands in a manner that causes erosion or rutting, or that injures, damages, or destroys trees or growing crops. Construction of a permanent, unauthorized trail on state forest lands is also prohibited under Minnesota Rules, Chapter 6100.1950.

Response 21.4. The exceptions in MN Stat. Chapt. 84.926 provide for licensed big-game hunters and trappers lawfully engaged in the taking of game during legal seasons within 'limited' and 'managed' state forests. Prohibitions against erosion, rutting, or damage to vegetation do still apply. No changes are proposed to the current law.

Disabled individuals can obtain special use permits allow for ATV use on state lands for big game hunting. The Commissioner may also grant a variance to private landowners and leaseholders when the only reasonable access to their land is across state forest land.

Response 21.5. See Response 21.4.

Response 21.6. Some 265.3 miles of non-designated routes will retain this designation in Pine County ) under the Final Plans (for 4 forests). These routes, and the areas they access, will be available (exclusively) for non-motor forest users during much of the year under the limited forest classification. Hunters and trappers may use of ATVs and HLVs seasonally on these routes, unless posted closed, pursuant to MS Chapt. 84.926.

The Final Plan also includes many miles of Minimum Maintenance Roads that can be used by both OHVs and Highway-Licensed Vehicles, subject to any temporary or seasonal use-restrictions. ATVs and OHMs may not always be subject to the same seasonal or temporary road use restrictions (if based solely upon vehicle weight) as are HLVs. Any forest road restrictions, or exceptions, will be clearly posted.

Response 21.7. The DNR encourages citizens to report violations to local Conservation Officers by calling the TIP Line at 1-800-652-9093. To reduce disturbance during prime hunting hours, a person possessing a valid deer

license may operate an ATV during firearms deer season only: [This restriction does not apply to vehicles licensed for highway use.]

- before legal shooting hours (1/2 hour before sunrise);
- from 11 AM until 2 PM; or
- after legal shooting hours (1/2 hour after sunset).

Response 21.8. The four Pine County state forests are classified as limited, which allows for motorized access via forest roads and trails posted open. However approximately 265 miles of non-designated forest access routes will retain that status (read closed) under the final plan. This de facto expansion of non-motorized routes should appeal to those seeking a non-motorized trail recreation (or hunting) experience.

Persons seeking a non-motorized outdoor recreation experience are more likely to find what they're looking for in DNR Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, State Wilderness Areas, or State Scientific and Natural Areas. Non-motor experiences can also be found in National Parks or Federal Wildlife Management Areas, or in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Area of the Superior National Forest. All of these management units are explicitly non-motorized. Posted private property may also provide non-motor opportunities.

State forests, on the other hand, are "working forests" that are actively managed to provide for "multiple-uses" and a "sustained-yield" of goods and services, including outdoor recreation. State Forests are not, by statutory definition, designated wilderness or solitude areas. They host a mix of commercial, industrial and resource management activities that are generally inconsistent with wilderness or a "wilderness-like" experience (e.g., timber harvest, road building, motor recreation, wildlife cuts and crop plantings, mining and gravel extraction, prescribed fire, tree planting, fuelwood and bough harvest, etc). State Forests are typically roaded and accessible, and have traditionally hosted a mix of motorized and non-motorized activities.

State Forest "sub-areas" are managed with a focus on outdoor recreation. According to Minnesota Statutes 86A.05, Subd.7, designated sub areas are intended to permit recreational use of the forest "in its natural state" in a manner "consistent with the primary purposes of the forest." Although no new sub-areas are being proposed at this time, two such sites are located in the General C.C. Andrews State Forest (near Dago Lake). The Sandstone Team believes that the Final Plan is consistent with the spirit and intent of existing legislative policy direction.

## **22. Implementation**

Response 22.1. The Final Plans are not intended to be a comprehensive recreational plan or guide for the Pine county forests. Rather, the plans identify sustainable road and motorized trail access opportunities in the forests. These routes were screened in terms of need for public access, physical suitability, and potential environmental impacts. Routes not meeting these criteria will be closed to motorized uses (only) under the limited forest classification. Once the trail network is operational, Area Staff will periodically review trail conditions and make modifications as required. Trails may be closed if Area Staff find that management objectives are not being met.

The current planning exercise is a clear response to public concerns for the rapid growth of OHV use and the potential for environmental damage or displacement of non-motorized uses. Unlike the current condition which allows OHV travel virtually anywhere in the forest, OHV use will now be significantly restricted and rules enforced to ensure compliance.

Response 22.2. Even with the final motor route designations, motorized access will be reduced overall across each of the Pine County forests. This is because the Sandstone Team has determined that the balance of non-designated routes currently being used cannot sustain motorized traffic. The Department believes that implementation of plans for the Pine County state forests will result in a substantial improvement over current conditions.

Response 22.3. The DNR is committed to providing the necessary maintenance and monitoring resources in order to effectively implement the final plans. Detailed operational plans will also be adopted and implemented prior to the plan's effective date of December 31, 2006. See Response 22.2.

Response 22.4. The Minnesota Legislature has directed the DNR to accommodate OHV activity and has appropriated funding for this purpose. The DNR is committed to providing a "quality" OHV trail system in a responsible, sustainable manner. The DNR is cognizant of fiscal limitations and the substantial cost of operating trail systems. However, the DNR does not share this commenter's view of OHV funding as necessarily "finite" or "fixed," a view that places an artificial limit on motor trail development.

In practice, as trails are developed, vehicle registrations will likely continue to grow, just as vehicle license, registration and training fees will increase. The unrefunded fuel tax formulae will also be revisited periodically to reflect increased off-highway vehicle registrations and usage. Violator penalties, fines, fees, and bail schedules are also subject to change over time, providing still more earmarked resources for OHV-related enforcement and outreach. Finally, volunteer clubs and organizations, and their sponsors, enable DNR to leverage OHV-dedicated dollars through the Minnesota Trails Assistance (or grant-in-aid) Program to address continuing trail monitoring, maintenance, rider training and other needs.

The DNR believes that this dynamic fiscal environment, subject to legislative monitoring and control, will provide the resources necessary to administer a statewide system of quality OHV trails and riding opportunities. The DNR's experience with the state's extensive snowmobile trails system is instructive in this regard.

### **23. Law Violations**

Response 23.1. The DNR agrees that it is more important to achieve "managed use on managed trails" than to point fingers and make subjective judgments regarding who may be responsible for causing observed environmental damage. This exercise is intended to bring about improved management control of the Pine County forests by limiting OHV and motor vehicle access to designated routes only. The Final Plans and associated designations will effectively limit future damage by concentrating motorized use on routes judged sustainable by an interdisciplinary DNR Sandstone Team. Effective field enforcement also becomes possible once road and trail signing is in-place, maps are available, and forest users (and Enforcement Officers alike) have a fuller, clearer understanding of just what is and is not permitted within these "limited" forests.

### **24. Legislation 2004**

Response 24.1. In 2004, the Legislature modified wetland-related provisions providing additional clarification; see Minnesota Statutes 84.773, subdivisions 1-3. These measures became effective July 1, 2004.

### **25. Levels of Use / Need for Trails**

Response 25.1. The Nemadji State Forest is subject to relatively high OHV use levels. To date, this use has not been managed effectively. The DNR believes that the Final Plan will improve conditions by restricting motorized travel to (fewer) more suitable and sustainable routes designated and maintained specifically for this purpose.

Response 25.2. The general motorized use trend in the Nemadji has been relatively stable for the past two decades. The Final Plan will result in a net overall reduction in forest road and trail miles available for motorized access.

Response 25.3. The DNR acknowledges that the Border-to-Border Trail Study (1998) concluded that a sizable percentage of Minnesotans regularly engage in motorized trail recreation. The DNR concurs with this finding. It is important to note, however, that this study, and the recreation participation estimates contained therein, were derived largely from survey data rather than actual visitor counts or "hard" vehicle registration data. Estimates were extrapolated from what survey respondents reported over a selected recall period. In the DNR's experience, survey respondents do sometimes inadvertently exaggerate time actually spent outdoors, or may be unclear regarding

precisely where recreation occurred (i.e., public versus private lands). This confusion can cloud results and render findings statistically unreliable.

Although such estimates are not always reliable, they do provide a good indication of the type and extent of participation in particular trail-related activities. Such estimates are useful in helping recreation planners and managers gauge collective demand for these types of trail recreation facilities. The DNR agrees that the Border-to-Border Trail Study does show a substantial unmet need to develop additional OHV trails miles, especially designated ORV trail miles. The DNR intends to address this apparent disparity through the current OHV trail designation process, and through continued grant-in-aid ORV trail development in the years to come.

Response 25.4. Comment noted.

## **26. Maintenance Costs**

Response 26.1. Trail monitoring and repair costs vary widely based upon location, topography, soils and vegetation, and with the availability of trained staff or volunteers, heavy equipment and construction materials. No single average cost/mile is appropriate or meaningful in all circumstances.

The DNR does acknowledge the need to track trail construction, operations and trail maintenance expenditures. A report of OHV trail cost data and future projections was submitted to the State Legislature in 2005. That report is available at [www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us).

Response 26.2. The DNR is unaware of actual cost data that compares the costs of constructing, operating, or maintaining motorized versus non-motorized trails in Minnesota. The department is also aware of any factual basis for the commenters assertions regarding alleged trail user behavior. All trails can have impacts; all trails require regular monitoring and maintenance. The DNR agrees that properly designed and well-maintained trails have fewer unintended environmental consequences associated with them, and that motorized trails may require more frequent maintenance than some non-motorized trails, depending upon the type and level of use. See Response 26.1

## **27. Management Solutions**

Response 27.1. Comment noted.

Response 27.2. The Sandstone Team was charged with evaluating existing routes and ensuring that designated routes provide adequate access to the forests, while protecting natural resource functions and values. All team members participated in crafting the Final Plan.

Response 27.3. The Minnesota Legislature has directed the DNR to accommodate OHV (trail) activity and has appropriated funding for this purpose. The DNR is committed to providing a "quality" OHV trail system in a responsible, sustainable manner. Limiting OHV travel to (only) state forest roads is inconsistent with this fundamental policy direction. This exercise was to evaluate all motor routes in the forest, and to propose for official designation only those miles that can be reasonably sustained. The balance of the routes will be closed to motor use. The DNR believes this plan represents an improvement over current conditions.

Response 27.4. All trails will be subject to periodic assessment for non-native invasive species, and if detected, the appropriate control and/or eradication measures will be applied. See Response 15.1.

Response 27.5. All trails can have impacts. See Response 19.8.

Response 27.6. The DNR may close trails seasonally or temporarily to protect public safety or natural resources. Unsustainable trails will be closed indefinitely, and may be closed permanently subject to public process requirements.

Response 27.7. See Response 27.6.

Response 27.8. Minnesota State Forests serve many purposes. See Response 21.8.

Response 27.9. DNR has not developed an objective standard to restrict forest access along motor versus non-motor modes of travel as suggested in the comment. See Response 29.1

As noted in Response 51.1, the forest road and trail designations contained in the Final Plan are not based on a particular 'trail density' metric. Calculating the percentage of forest lands "more than one mile distant from designated trails" is of limited utility because it does not account for: 1) System and MMR present within the forest; or 2) Other routes that occur both within and outside the forest (e.g., freeways, highways, county and township roads, private access roads). Because motorized access can occur on routes other than designated trails, and on adjacent non-state lands as well, the focus on designated trails on state lands is misleading and illogical. That said, overall trail density will decline to varying degrees from the current condition under all four Pine County Final Plans.

The 2003 OHV legislation requires that DNR report on both motor and non-motor recreational opportunities in the state, including suggested policy changes. That report was submitted to the Legislature in January 2005.

Response 27.10. The route evaluations were focuses on existing routes showing evidence of motor use. Each segment proposed for designation was evaluated for potential natural resource impacts. Where proximity to sensitive resources was of concern, mitigative actions such as reroutes, seasonal closures, or treadway-design changes were considered. Where such measures were deemed impractical or unworkable, routes were left non-designated (effectively closed under the limited forest classification).

## **28. McCormick Lake**

Response 28.1. Motorized access, and proximity to Interstate 35, results in a "noisy" ambient condition for some of the General C.C. Andrews State Forest. Some individuals may find this annoying.

The area team recommended that all trails on state property located south of the Walters Road be closed to motorized use. This is reflected in the Final Plan. The establishment of a "quiet zone" by McCormick Lake was also considered by the Sandstone Team, but was rejected. Opportunities for a "quiet" recreational experience are present in two nearby designated non-motorized areas; one is around Dago Lake, and the other located just across Interstate 35 to the west of Dago Lake.

## **29. Multiple Use Management**

Response 29.1. The DNR (and others) provide a variety of geographically dispersed motorized, non-motorized, and mixed-use or multi-use trail recreation opportunities. Trail users should select that experience which best meets their needs and expectations. While some trails are designated for a single-use, most corridors serve more than one purpose and accommodate more than a single type of trail user.

It is the DNR's policy to encourage incidental, secondary, or shared use of designated trail corridors whenever possible, subject to user safety, user satisfaction, logistical and resource management considerations. This policy is intended to minimize new corridor development through the forest and the number of total trail miles necessary to meet trail use demand. Multiple designation also broadens the funding base available to develop, manage and maintain recreational trails. Although some trail uses are clearly incompatible (e.g., snowmobile and cross-country ski), there are various management tools such as a wider tread, dual treadways, one-way travel, speed limits, seasonal-use restrictions, special signing, etc., that can be applied to shared corridors to minimize the potential for conflict and to maximize both user safety and satisfaction.

Conflicts between motor and non-motor recreationists can and do occur. However, it is unreasonable to conclude that separate trail systems are warranted for each type of trail use in every instance. Moreover, given the limited size

and irregular configuration of the state forest land base, it is impossible to completely separate all motor and non-motor use areas, or even to insulate forest users from sounds emanating from outside forest boundaries (e.g., roads, highways, residential development). Some level of annoyance and continuing conflict can be anticipated.

The presence of motorized vehicles is the existing condition. Because OHV and snowmobile use of the area is well established, it is likely that those who dislike motorized use already avoid or minimize their use of this area. Some level of displacement may have already occurred and will persist with or without this proposal. Speculation regarding the proportion of motor versus non-motor users in the forest is largely unfounded and anecdotal. The DNR is unaware of any current, reliable scientific data on state forest use. Likewise, opinions regarding which type of use (motor or non-motor) is "better" or "more traditional" simply cannot and should not translate into priority or preference. The DNR Sandstone Team believes that the Final Plan is consistent with the spirit and intent of legislative policy direction.

This proposal envisions a net forest-wide reduction in motorized road and trail miles. In some cases, substantial (de facto) non-motor areas will result. Motorized forest users will be confined to designated roads and trails, while non-motor forest users may traverse most any route through the forest, designated or not. The DNR will work to control off-trail riding and the proliferation of unauthorized routes. Unlawful riding can result in unacceptable resource impacts and conflicts with other forest users.

DNR will monitor and re-evaluate trail use and trail conditions periodically to determine whether additional measures (e.g., signage, dual trail treadways, speed zones, temporary closures, special restrictions) are necessary to remedy demonstrated user conflicts or to mitigate potentially dangerous conditions. Adjustments can and will be made in consultation with affected stakeholders.

Response 29.2. State forests are actively managed to provide for "multiple-uses" and a "sustained-yield" of goods and services, including outdoor recreation. They host a mix of commercial, industrial, and resource management activities that are generally inconsistent and incompatible with wilderness or a "wilderness-like" experience (e.g., timber harvest, road building, motor recreation, wildlife cuts and crop plantings, mining and gravel extraction, prescribed fire, tree planting, fuelwood and bough harvest). State Forests are roaded and accessible, and have traditionally hosted a mix of motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities.

The DNR intends to provide adequate motor access to state forest lands for recreational and utilitarian forest users (e.g., hunters, anglers, trappers, harvesters and collectors). In the judgment of the DNR Sandstone Team, this proposal provides reasonable motor access to most areas of the forest. In so doing, it also recognizes the needs and desires of non-motorized constituents to use state forest lands absent motor influences.

Response 29.3. According to DNR-sponsored research<sup>1</sup>, the majority of ATV riders are middle-aged, middle-income, predominantly married males with four or more years of riding experience. More than 75% of these riders report living outside of the Twin Cities Metro Area. Some 60% claim to ride their ATV three or more days/week during the summer riding season. Most riding households report owning more than one machine and they average 2.2 riders per household.

Fully 70% of survey respondents reported riding principally or exclusively on private property, with the remainder using a mix of public and private lands. Nearly half use their machines mostly for recreational purposes. Another 25% use ATVs chiefly for hunting or fishing, or for farming, ranching, and utility work or competition racing. The DNR is charged with providing a system of designated OHV trails and OHV Recreation Areas that provides Minnesota riders with access to suitable recreation opportunities on state forest lands.

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<sup>1</sup> Recreation Professionals, 1998. "Profiles of Nine Trail User Populations: A Component of the Border to Border Trail Study", and Genereux, 2001. "An OHV Planning Tool Based on a Survey of Resource Managers and A Survey of OHV Riders in Minnesota". Both reports were prepared under contract with MN DNR, Trails & Waterways Division, St. Paul, MN 55155-4052.

### **30. Munger State Trail East / Gandy Dancer State Trail**

Response 30.1. The Draft Plan did not propose any change in motorized designation for that five (5) mile portion of the Willard Munger State Trail East that occurs in the Chengwatana State Forest. The DNR regrets any confusion that might have resulted from the presentation of this topic in the Draft Plan and maps.

The remaining portion of the Willard Munger State Trail East may someday be designated for ATV/OHM use. If and when this should occur, this development will be subject to preparation of a court-ordered Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). The DNR will pursue all new trail designations in a separate, subsequent public process following the conclusion of this planning effort.

Response 30.2. The Willard Munger State Trail is a paved, multi-use trail connecting Hinckley and Duluth. The addition of OHVs is not proposed for this particular segment of the Willard Munger State Trail.

Response 30.3. No changes in motorized uses are proposed for the Willard Munger State Trail East at this time. See Response 30.1.

Response 30.4. No changes in motorized use are proposed for the Gandy Dancer State Trail at this time.

### **31. Natural Heritage Sites**

Response 31.1. Rare natural feature locations were considered for all proposed forest road and trail designations in each of the four forests. Both the route screening process and the Rapid Environmental Assessment Checklist include careful consideration of rare plants, animals, geological and biological features.

The DNR interdisciplinary team concluded that direct impacts to heritage elements were unlikely so long as motorized traffic stayed on designated, maintained forest roads and trails. Indirect effects, such as exhaust, dust, or noise, were also deemed insignificant from these existing routes.

Various protective measures are available, such as seasonal trail closures during breeding seasons or during other critical times (e.g., seasonal migration). Other impact avoidance efforts may include minimizing new intrusions into floodplains and sensitive plant communities, such as designated old growth forest stands (where present).

Response 31.2. See Response 31.1

Response 31.3. See Response 31.1.

Response 31.4. See Response 31.1.

### **32. Non-Motor Recreational Opportunities and Noise-related Impacts**

Response 32.1. The final forest road and trail configuration will leave substantial portions of the Chengwatana State Forest without motorized access. Overall motorized access is substantially reduced from current conditions. In particular, a substantial area of upland forest in the southeast corner of the forest will henceforth be without motor access. See Response 32.2.

Response 32.2. The forests currently host a mix of motorized and non-motor recreation, as is customary for most state forests. Given the diversity of public opinion on the use of OHVs, there is no state land allocation formula likely to satisfy all interests. With the limited size and irregular configuration of the forest land base, it is impossible to completely separate all motor and non-motor use areas, or even to insulate forest users from sounds emanating from outside forest boundaries (e.g., township roads, highways, residential development). Some level of annoyance can be expected. See Responses 29.1 and 32.5.

Response 32.3. The Final Plan contains little new trail designation in the vicinity of the hiking/walking and horseback trails within the St. Croix State Forest. No substantial change in forest road or trail miles is proposed. Potential safety concerns will be addressed in operational planning.

Response 32.4. ATV and motor vehicle noise have been a component of the forest “soundscape” in the project area for many years. The proposed trail designations will not substantially change this current condition. The proposed reduction in OHV trail miles and improved signing and enforcement will, however, create substantial (de facto) non-motorized areas within the forest in which noise levels should be reduced from current levels.

The DNR acknowledges that many Minnesotans find the sounds associated with OHVs to be annoying and objectionable. Persons seeking a “quiet” and/or non-motorized recreational experience are more likely to find it in DNR Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, State Wilderness Areas, or Scientific and Natural Areas. Non-motor experiences can also be found in National Parks or Federal Wildlife Management Areas, or in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Area of the Superior National Forest. All of these management units are explicitly non-motorized. Posted private property may also provide non-motor recreational opportunities.

The sound emitted by the operation of all motor vehicles, including OHVs, is regulated in Minnesota. Minnesota Rules, Chapter 6102.0040, subp. 4 stipulates that no person shall sell or operate a vehicle on Minnesota public lands or trails unless it is equipped with a muffler having a USFS-approved spark arrestor, and unless overall noise emission does not exceed a sound level limitation of 99 dB(A) using the 20-inch stationary sound test (SAE J1287, Jul98), which measures exhaust sound. This test is relatively easy to conduct and effective in identifying excessively loud motorcycles or ATVs in the field. DNR Conservation Officers and Natural Resource Officers are trained and equipped to conduct this test and authorized to issue citations for equipment violations.

Minnesota Rules further stipulate that no noise suppressing system or muffler may be equipped with a cutout, bypass, or similar (after market) device which has the effect of amplifying or increasing vehicle noise, except as authorized by Minnesota Statutes Section 84.795, Subd. 7; M.S. Section 84.804, Subd 5; and M.S. Section 84.928, Subd.5. Violators will be cited.

The DNR is committed to enforcing the state’s ambient noise rules (MN Rules, Chap. 7030). These standards are administered by the MPCA in cooperation with state and local units of government. They are receiver-based standards, tied to land-use classifications, which are consistent with speech, sleep, annoyance and hearing conversation requirements. The DNR finds MPCA Noise Standards a useful and appropriate tool for measuring and controlling potential nuisance noise effects.

Response 32.5. See Responses 29.1 and 29.2. Substantial portions of each of the Pine County forests contain no motorized trails and therefore can provide for a variety of non-motor recreational opportunities. Examples follow.

In the Chengwatana State Forest, most of the forest is covered by wetland and will have little or no motor trail access. A substantial upland area in the southeastern part of the forest, which abuts the St. Croix River, does have existing trails which will not be designated for motor use. In the General C.C. Andrews State Forest, two non-motorized state forest sub-areas are present. The first is northeast of Dago Lake and the second is in the western part of the forest, in and around the General Andrews Tree Nursery.

In the Nemadji State Forest, the bulk of the forest remains non-motorized because roughly 70% of the forest is wetland. Wetland areas are generally unsuited to OHV use and were largely avoided. The eastern portion of the Nemadji contains very few motorized routes. This provides a substantial area with very limited motorized access or use. In the St. Croix State Forest, the entire portion of the forest from the Horse Camp south to the campground has no trails. The forest road located in this part of the forest is off limits to ATV and OHM use. The majority of the forest is wetland with no motorized trails.

Response 32.6. The forests currently host a mix of motorized and non-motorized activities, which is customary for state forests. This proposal envisions a net forest-wide reduction in motorized road/trail miles. Still, there is no state land allocation decision likely to satisfy all interests. Surface land-use zoning has not been attempted in order to achieve this “balance.” Given the limited size and irregular configuration of the state forest land base, it is impossible to completely separate all motor and non-motor use areas. Some level of annoyance should be anticipated.

Response 32.7. Comment noted. All trails/routes support non-motor use. See Responses 27.7 and 18.1.

Response 32.8. In the opinion of the Sandstone Team, the final trail designations in the eastern, separate section of the General C.C. Andrews State Forest provide adequate motorized access to this part of the unit. Adjacent county-administered motor trails also access this section.

Response 32.9. See Response 12.8. In the judgment of the DNR Sandstone Team, this proposal provides reasonable motorized access to most, but not all, areas of the forest. In so doing, it recognizes the needs and desires of non-motorized constituents to use state forest lands absent motor influences. This plan also recognizes non-motorized recreational opportunities outside these forests, on nearby state and federal (public) properties.

Response 32.10. See Response 29.1

Response 32.11. See Responses 27.9, 29.1, 29.2, and 32.5.

Response 32.12. See Response 32.9.

Response 32.13. See Response 29.1.

Response 32.14. See Responses 27.9, 29.1, 29.2, and 32.5.

Response 32.15. See Responses 21.8 and 29.1.

Response 32.16. Comment noted.

### **33. OHV-related Impacts**

Response 33.1. The DNR acknowledges that all recreational trail use carries with it the potential for unintended environmental effects. With proper trail alignment, design, construction and regular maintenance, the DNR believes that it can sustainably provide for OHV use of state forest lands. This involves the use of stable, naturally shaped engaging and narrow OHV trails that encourage relatively slow travel and highlight natural features. Hardened trail treads will be employed where native soils cannot resist displacement and sustainable crossings will be used to minimize disturbance to surface water, wetlands and other sensitive natural features. Regular trail monitoring, maintenance and field enforcement are intended to help ensure that trails do not fall into disrepair or generate unacceptable social or environmental impacts.

See the following responses that address the specific examples of impact offered in the comment: Response 60.17/Sedimentation; Response 14.1/Erosion; Response 32.4/Noise Pollution; and Response 15.1 - Non-Native Noxious Invasive Weed Spread]

### **34. OHV Laws – 2002 and 2003**

Response 34.1. The 2002 State Legislature did prohibit cross-country travel on state-administered forest lands, except for certain hunting- and trapping-related exceptions identified in Minnesota Rules part 6100.1950, subpart 7D. (Since amended) The DNR disagrees that the resulting ban on cross-country travel was “inconsequential.” Limiting OHV activity to designated roads and trails is critical to protecting sensitive forest and wetland areas from inappropriate vehicular use, and for maintaining the integrity of traditionally non-motorized areas.

Response 34.2. The Motorized trails Task Force submitted its recommendations to the Legislature in January 2003. The DNR agrees that many worthwhile policy recommendations were contained in this report, and finds the report a useful reference on a variety of OHV-related topics. Copies are available at [www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us) .

Response 34.3. Comment noted.

Response 34.4. Comment noted.

### **35. OHV Registrations and Ridership**

Response 35.1. The DNR agrees that the preponderance of state land riding is utilitarian in nature (e.g., hunting, trapping, collecting) and that (purely) recreational trail riders represent only a fraction of all riders. This fact is borne out by the report entitled: *"Profiles of Nine Trail User Populations", (1998) by Recreation Professionals, Inc.* It is also reflected in findings from *Genereux, 2001, "An OHV Planning Tool."* Both reports were prepared under contract with DNR, Trails & Waterways.

It is important to remember, however, that machines purchased for one purpose are commonly used for another. This is especially true of today's increasingly versatile ATVs. Many machines are dual-licensed (for both Agricultural and recreational use) and few are dedicated solely to either utilitarian or recreational purposes. Some combination of these uses is the norm.

It is also true that a sizable percentage of riders report riding primarily on private or other public property and that OHV use is not disproportionately concentrated on state forest lands. Read differently, the same data indicate that a significant proportion of OHV riders/drivers do report riding on public lands, at least some of the time, in every region of the state. Their use is contingent upon the availability of designated OHV trails and riding areas. As these facilities are designated, and as large, industrial forest ownerships are increasingly posted off-limits to OHVs, many more riders are expected to turn to state lands.

The data also demonstrate that OHVs are frequently unaware of public land riding opportunities and confused regarding the ownership of trails and lands they ride on. This, combined with statistical limitations inherent in (any) behavioral studies, makes any strict assessment of public versus private land riding behavior suspect. Motorized recreationists and utilitarians comprise a large and growing segment of state land users. It is important that DNR recognize and plan responsibly for this use.

### **36. OHVs – Definitions**

Response 36.1. Minnesota Statute defines what constitutes an OHV, specifically:

- ATV. All Terrain Vehicles are motorized, floatation-tired vehicles with from 3-6 low-pressure tires, with an engine displacement of less than 800cc and total dry weight of less than 900 lbs. ATVs over 900 lbs are ORVs. [MS.84.92, Subd. 8]
- OHM. Off-Highway Motorcycles are motorized off-highway vehicles traveling on two wheels. OHMs have a seat or saddle and handlebars for steering. Street-legal motorcycles considered OHMs if operated off-road on trails or natural terrain. [MS 84.797, Subd. 7]
- OHV. Off-Highway Vehicle; includes all OHMs, ATVs and ORVs operated off-road [MS 84.771]
- ORV. Off Road Vehicles are motorized recreational vehicles with an engine displacement of more than 800 cc and total dry weight of more than 800 lbs. Included are 4-wheel drive trucks and jeeps; not included are snowmobiles, ATVs, motorcycles watercraft or aircraft. Farm, utility and enforcement vehicles are also not considered to be ORVs when used for their intended purpose. [MS 84.797, Subd. 7]

MN Stat. Chapt. 84.771, in 2003 eliminated reference to the term "Recreational Motor Vehicle" or RMV.

### **37. Off-Road Vehicles (or ORVs)**

Response 37.1. The Final Plans accommodate ORV-related forest access and recreation through the designation of Minimum Maintenance Roads and through departmental commitments to entertain ORV-only recreational trail proposals in the future. The agency will also continue to work with OHV groups to pursue riding opportunities, such as those at the Iron Range OHV Recreation Area and the Appleton Area OHV Recreation Park, which provide a more challenging and specialized motorized recreational experience.

Regarding historic travel "maps" and the use of "primitive roads," these have been reviewed and considered. Some of the routes identified on the maps do remain open to ORV use under the Final Plan.

Response 37.2. Since release of the Draft Plans for review, the Department has instructed the Sandstone Team to specifically provide for ORV access and recreational use. The short, non-technical ORV trails proposed for the gravel pits off of the Pottlatch and Park Forest Roads are in response to this request. These and other possibilities will be examined subsequent to this planning effort. Regarding ORV-related funding issues, see Response 18.2.

Response 37.3. Comment noted.

Response 37.4. This gravel pit may be suitable for ORV use despite the site's small size. See 37.2. The Final Plan does not propose any change in trail use designation of the Willard Munger State Trail East.

Response 37.5. The General C.C. Andrews State Forest offers some excellent OHV riding opportunities. Because of its location, the forest receives relatively heavy use by all types of OHVs, including ORVs.

The Blueberry Hill Area does appear to provide excellent riding opportunities. However, due to its size and safety factors, the site will not remain open to ORV use. Many of the routes in sections 30, 31, and 36 are forest roads which will be open to ORVs unless posted closed. The Sandstone Team believes that the Final Plan is consistent with the spirit and intent of existing legislative direction. Future ORV trail designations will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Response 37.6. The route evaluation and designation process used by the DNR Sandstone Team is the same as that used elsewhere. The Team evaluated the existing route inventory and identified those routes that could sustain motorized use, including ORV use.. In response to public comments, and Commissioner's Office direction, the Final Plan provides added access for ORVs and HLVs through (mostly) the designation of additional MMRs.

Response 37.7. See Response 37.6.

Response 37.8. Comment noted.

Response 37.9. DNR appreciates the map submittals. These were reviewed and considered by the Sandstone Team. Of the non-designated routes highlighted on the maps, many will be designated as Minimum Maintenance Roads. Both ORVs and highway-licensed vehicles may use these roads, subject to seasonal weight limits that may apply. The remaining routes were deemed unsuited to motorized use and were left non-designated (effectively closed to motor use). See Response 37.1.

### **38. Other Costs**

Response 38.1. This planning exercise is intended to improve management control of the Pine County forests by limiting OHV and motor vehicle access to (fewer miles of) designated routes. It effectively limits future damage by concentrating motorized use on (fewer) routes judged sustainable by an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists. Effective field enforcement also becomes possible once road and trail signing is in-place, maps are available, and forest users (and Enforcement Officers alike) have a clearer understanding of just what is and is not permitted within these 'limited' forests. The DNR believes that the Final Plan is a marked improvement over the current condition.

### **39. Physical Suitability**

Response 39.1. The Willard Munger State Trail East from the Snake River Campground to the north has never been actively maintained for ATV or OHV usage, but if designated, funding would be made available for much needed improvements. Many of the single-track trails noted in this comment will be closed to off-highway vehicle use, and will either revegetate naturally or be kept open and passable by non-motorized users.

### **40. Private Property Issues**

Response 40.1. The DNR Division of Forestry can issue "Special Use Permits" to landowners and leaseholders to enable them to access to their private properties in the event of seasonal road and/or trail closures. The Area Forestry Supervisor is charged with issuing these permits. Contact the nearest Area Forestry Office for details.

Response 40.2. Of the 42,000 acres of lands located within the St. Croix State Forest, 27,000 acres is held in State ownership and another 2,000 acres held by other government agencies. The DNR observes a "good neighbor policy" and recognizes that forest management decisions must also consider adjacent property interests. All affected interests have been consulted during the course of this multi-year planning process.

### **41. Process-related Issues**

Response 41.1. The DNR released the Draft Plans for an 88-day public comment period. MN Rules, Chapt. 6100.1950 requires a minimum 60-day notice. No deadline extensions are permitted.

Response 41.2. The Legislature has directed the DNR to complete the state forest reclassification and trail designation process for all DNR-administered lands by December 31, 2008. This can only be accomplished by adhering a rigorous, year-round planning schedule. Consequently, plans must be released for review as they become available, rather than when weather conditions are best suited to field review.

Interested persons are encouraged to follow the forest inventory and planning process at <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/ohv/index.html>. This forest-by-forest listing tracks progress on all 56 Minnesota State Forests. Plans, maps, and public information materials are also provided, along with contact numbers for plans currently undergoing public review.

Response 41.3. The Final Plans and related documentation contain the best and most current available information available to the department at this time. Resource data and analyses were sufficient to enable field teams to conduct a full and fair route evaluation. Preliminary maps have been refined, corrected and improved, and are now much more accurate as a result of public review, field checks and discussions with adjacent landowners.

Response 41.4. The Sandstone Team was provided with guidelines and criteria for use in evaluating existing motor routes. All team decisions are documented, and the rationale is recorded for each route determination decision.

Response 41.5. The Final Plan, final maps, and all Commissioner's Orders for the Pine County forests are available at [www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us). Contact the DNR for additional planning documentation or administrative records.

### **42. Proposed Trail Designations & Closures**

Response 42.1. The DNR intends to provide a well-distributed system of designated OHV trails and motor vehicle routes that provide recreational access to state forest lands, while accommodating utilitarian forest users (e.g., hunters, anglers, trappers, harvesters and collectors). In the judgment of the Sandstone Team, this proposal provides reasonable motor access to most areas of the forest. In so doing, it also recognizes the needs and desires of non-motorized constituents to use state forest lands absent the influence of motorized vehicles.

Response 42.2. Trail designation decisions resulted from an interdisciplinary examination of existing routes and a rigorous analysis of social and environmental effects. Blanket closures were never considered. The DNR will

monitor and re-evaluate trail use and trail conditions periodically to determine whether additional measures (e.g. signage, trail treatments, enforcement, temporary closures, special restrictions) are necessary to remedy demonstrated user impacts, or to mitigate potentially dangerous conditions. The Sandstone Team believes that the Final Plan provides reasonable motor access to the Pine County forests.

Response 42.3. The DNR acknowledges the role of the ORV dedicated account in supporting of the trail designation process. The department also acknowledges the lack of ORV trail opportunities in the Draft and Final Plans for all four Pine County state forests. See Responses 37.1, 29.1, and 29.2.

Response 42.4. See Topic 51, Trail Density, for a detailed discussion of this issue.

The Sandstone Team did consider trail density information and maps, along with a wealth of other natural resource data, maps and aerial photography. Trail density was but one of many factors that collectively aided the team in making route designation determinations. No single consideration, like trail density, influenced team decision making more than did any other.

Response 42.5. See the discussions under Topic 57, Unconnected Segments / Dead-End Trails.

There has been little change in the total mileage of formerly undesignated routes proposed for designation between the draft and final plans. There is, however, some change in the types of uses that will be allowed on these routes, notably for ORVs and HLVs. This is due, in large part, to the assignment of MMR status to many routes originally proposed for trail designation.

Response 42.6. The network of forest roads and trails could be expanded by adding OHV use to the Willard Munger State Trail East. The Department will consider doing this pursuant to a separate public process in the near future. If and when such a project does come forward, it will be subject to court-ordered Environmental review. If approved, this project could provide up to five additional miles of ATV / OHM trail to the total mileage in the Final Plan.

Response 42.7. The small forest road loop that goes to Boulder Campground on Rock Lake is and will remain a motor route providing HLV access to the campground. This route will be closed to OHV use, as per the Final Plan.

Response 42.8. It is true that motorized use has historically kept many of the non-designated routes open. It is also correct that these routes may well revegetate and disappear in coming years, unless kept open by non-motorized trail users. The DNR will not maintain these routes for recreational use.

### **43. Rapid Environmental Assessment Checklist**

Response 43.1. The Rapid Environmental Assessment Checklist (REAC) was never intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of all potential trail-related environmental effects. Rather, as the name implies the REAC is a tool for use by the Planning Teams to quickly determine whether a proposed trail designation has the potential for significant environmental effects, and if it does, whether effects could be readily avoided, minimized or mitigated. All routes recommended for designation have undergone this evaluation. Routes left non-designated, hence closed to motor use, were not routinely subjected to this review.

The REAC does not assess cumulative impacts at the watershed or ecosystem scales. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of the current route designation exercise. Landscape-scale planning is done in DNR's Subsection Forest Resource Management Plans (SFRMP) process. In that process, cumulative effects of a variety of forest management practices are considered pro-actively in an ecosystem-based context. Forest recreation, however, is not an issue currently addressed by SFRMP planners.

### **44. Safety Issues**

Response 44.1. Comments noted. See Response 13.5.

## 45. Signage

Response 45.1. The roads just north of the property in question, have been part of the designated trail system for many years. The notion of designating the road to the north, rather than nearer the property, was considered, but rejected by the Sandstone Team. The DNR may installing signs in that area to reduce average travel speeds.

Response 45.2. A stop sign was recently installed as described in the comment.

Response 45.3. The DNR continually re-evaluates its sign inventory with an eye toward developing (positive message) signs that are both simple and informative. A new signing manual has been developed in response to this statewide forest planning initiative. Many new signs and a new signing placement protocol is being followed as finished plans are implemented.

## 46. State Forest Management

Response 46.1. The DNR Division of Forestry, which is responsible for managing these forests, has been providing multi-use forest trails for many years. The State's first OHV trails were constructed in Pine County in the mid-1980s, while campgrounds and/or dispersed camping have been in-service since the mid-1960s. More recently, the DNR Division of Trails and Waterways assumed responsibility for forest trail maintenance and management, just as DNR Parks and Recreation assumed control of forest campgrounds. The Division of Forestry is no longer actively involved with managing or maintaining outdoor recreation facilities on state forest lands.

Regarding the "enhance[ment of] savannahs, deciduous and coniferous forests," this in fact is underway. Over the last 10 years DNR foresters have been working with staff at St. Croix State Park in an attempt to recreate jack pine savannahs through repeated burning. Some areas are beginning to show improvement, but only time will tell if the efforts actually bear fruit. Hardwood savannah ecotypes are rare in Pine County, and St. Croix State Park may provide valuable restoration impetus.

Review of timber status records from the late 1800s indicates larger pine forests, with higher quality hardwoods stands, occurred on some of the productive loam (or sandy loam) sites. The DNR is now working with the Ecological Classification System (ECS) data to develop individualized site management prescriptions. ECS is an excellent tool for determining which species will grow best on particular sites.

Response 46.2. See Response 46.1 for an explanation of the Division of Forestry's trail-related responsibilities. State forests are managed for multiple-uses and sustained-yields of various natural resource amenities and commodities, including wood fiber, timber stumpage, gravel and minerals, improved water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreation. The current motor route access planning process was conducted to ensure that Minnesotans enjoy adequate access to this valuable public asset. See Response 29.2.

Response 46.3. See Response 29.2.

Response 46.4. Many existing routes were originally timber extraction routes that were kept open though continued use. Where use could be sustained, routes were designated and will be maintained to a standard appropriate for the intended use(s). Unsustainable routes will remain non-designated, thereby closing them to most motorized use.

Regarding ORV routes, many timber harvest roads and skid trails have been converted into forest roads over the past 25 years. Forest roads are, by definition, open to all motorized traffic, including HLVs, ATVs, OHMs and ORVs. The new MMR designations will provide additional ORV access on many formerly non-designated routes.

Response 46.5. All designated non-motorized trails and non-designated routes are now available for (exclusively) non-motorized forest access. Motorized users are prohibited from using these routes in a limited forest, and must remain on designated roads or trails, except pursuant to the hunting / trapping exceptions (MS Chap. 84.926).

#### **47. Statewide Trail System**

Response 47.1. The Pine County designations do not provide for “an interconnected statewide trail network.”

#### **48. Total Trail Miles**

Response 48.1. The DNR did not provide teams with any pre-determined trail quota or target mileage to guide the trail designation process. The Sandstone Team evaluated the route inventory information on a forest-by-forest basis, applied screening criteria, and produced the recommendations contained in the Final Plan. The team is satisfied that the final access route recommendations provide adequate access to each of the forests, while protecting sensitive natural resources. Comparisons to other forests, in other states or provinces, are not relevant to this exercise.

Response 48.2. The total motorized route mileage will be substantially reduced pending implementation of the Final Plans. This is because non-designated routes, showing evidence of use, will no longer be available for motor uses.

#### **49. Trail Ambassador Program**

Response 49.1. The 2003 State Legislature enacted a number of important policy and budget provisions related to Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) management. Among these, is the OHV Safety & Conservation Program [*MN Stat. 84.901*]. This program is intended to promote the safe and responsible operation of OHVs. The department is encouraged to enter into agreements with clubs for volunteer services to maintain, improve and monitor OHV trails on state forest land and other public lands. This volunteer program is being coordinated by Trails & Waterways through DNR’s Regional Offices. Off-Highway Vehicle enthusiasts in Minnesota continue to support the establishment of a program like Wisconsin’s Trail Ambassador Program.

#### **50. Trail Connections**

Response 50.1. Trails or trail connections outside of state forest boundaries require the support and involvement of enthusiast groups. The Minnesota Trails Assistance (or GIA) Program assists in local trail development with the help of local clubs and local government sponsors. No such proposal has been received for the above referenced project.

Response 50.2. Non-state properties are not included in this route designation exercise. Local road authorities are responsible for determining whether OHV use of road ditches under their authority is appropriate.

#### **51. Trail Density**

Response 51.1. The DNR has not developed or applied trail density criteria in this exercise. However, it should be noted that the Team’s recommendations result in a net reduction in overall motorized trail mileage across each of the Pine County forests. Since many of the non-designated routes are located in the northeastern part of the forest, overall trail density will decline significantly in this area following Final Plan implementation. See Response 27.9.

It is also noteworthy that the General C.C. Andrews State Forest includes two designated State Forest Sub-Areas where motorized use is already prohibited. Both areas, located in the northern portion of the forest, provide an excellent non- motorized recreation opportunity. The DNR acknowledges that some may find ambient noise levels in these areas objectionable. This is due largely to proximity to Interstate 35 which dissects the two sub areas, but also to the extensive forest road and trail network located nearby.

Response 51.2. See Response 27.9.

#### **52. Trail Inventory**

Response 52.1. Draft route inventory maps were shared with grant-in-aid clubs in order to benefit from their firsthand knowledge of existing forest trails and former special event motor routes. The inventory maps, however, do not show newly proposed GIA trails, unlike maps prepared for previous planning efforts. This may be the source of “missing trail” segments noted in the comment.

Response 52.2. The access road to the Snake River Campground was shown on draft maps as a non-motorized route, which is incorrect. This correction has been made to the Final Plan maps.

As noted in Response 30.1, the Final Plan proposes no change in status for the Willard Munger State Trail East. However, it will be subject to further evaluation in the near future. Additional motorized trail designations may or may not occur, but either way public participation will be an important part of the review and evaluation process.

The Pine County maps have been corrected and updated. Any remaining errors will be identified and corrected as they are detected during plan implementation.

Response 52.3. The DNR concurs on the value of this first-ever comprehensive statewide route inventory effort.

Response 52.4. The trail designation process for the Pine County state forests updated the forest inventory maps originally prepared in 1999. The inventory captures both motorized and non-motorized routes that show signs of ongoing human use. All non-designated routes now being designated as (as either a MMR or trail) have already hosted some level of motorized use. Non-designated routes not showing evidence of previous motorized use will remain available for non-motorized access and use.

A substantial number of route miles are being “closed” to motorized use. These routes will remain open to non-motorized use. It is likely, however, that many non-designated routes will “brush over” once motorized activity ceases. There are no plans for the DNR to maintain these non-designated forest access routes.

Response 52.5. The comment is correct; the error has been removed from the St. Croix State Forest maps.

Response 52.6. Motorized trail designation is a primary focus of this planning exercise, pursuant to MN Laws 2003, Chap. 128, Article 1, Section 167. See Response 52.4.

### **53. Trail Proliferation**

Response 53.1. There is evidence to indicate that ATVs are illegally crossing Red Horse Creek. The crossings are occurring at two locations. The first is at a site where a State Forest Road crosses the creek, and the other is where the currently designated trail crosses. Prevention measures (e.g., gates, signs, fencing) have been instituted with good success in both locations. These sites will continue to be monitored and violators will be cited and prosecuted.

Response 53.2. Unmanaged motorized use invariably leads to problems. Routes in the Pine County forests were unplanned, and are largely the result of past logging activity. Historic map files indicate that there were more routes in the past than exist now. However, timber extraction routes that historically revegetated (relatively) quickly are not always doing so now because of heavy recreational use, particularly ATV use. This is a source of continuing concern for forest managers.

With implementation of the Final Plans, most non-designated routes should quickly revegetate. Trail proliferation should stabilize, then decline in coming years, as forest visitors become accustomed to the new access management scheme, and as forest road and trail travel patterns mature.

Response 53.3. Motorized access will decrease in all four Pine County forests. Little new construction is planned or anticipated. The trail designation process should greatly help stem (illegal) motor route proliferation.

### **54. Trail System Features**

Response 54.1. Motorized use will be limited to a subset of existing routes that can sustain this use. Little new trail construction is planned or anticipated. The DNR believes that the Final Plans for the Pine County forests represent a marked improvement over the current condition.

Response 54.2. See Responses 12.8 and 59.1.

Response 54.3. See Response 54.2.

Response 54.4. Regarding the types of experiences desired by OHV users, the Genereux Study (2001) offers some insights. For example:

- 97% of ATV riders prefer easy trails through scenic areas.
- 98% prefer trails with destinations of special interest.
- Family riding is important.

More recent studies support these basic findings, which contradict popular stereotypes of OHV riders. Off-roading is an increasingly popular family activity. Riders have a variety of motivations for riding, and the vast majority are law-abiding citizens who wish to do the right thing. With implementation of the Final Plans, trails will be clearly signed and mapped and riding prohibitions will be very clear. It is also worth noting that recent sales of larger, heavier utility ATVs are outselling traditional ATVs, and far outpacing the sales of hi-performance racing machines.

Response 54.5. The Sandstone Team was charged with evaluating existing routes and determining which of these could sustain motor use. This has resulted in a substantial reduction in motor routes across the Pine County forests.

The DNR believes that the Final Plan represents a marked improvement over the current condition. The Department is committed to monitoring and re-evaluating trail use and trail conditions periodically to determine whether additional measures are necessary to remedy demonstrated environmental impacts, or to mitigate unsafe or environmentally damaging conditions.

Response 54.6. The Chengwatana State Forest Road System is very limited, with a total of only six miles. Restricting ATV/OHV access to forest roads would leave large areas of the forest inaccessible to OHVs. The DNR believes that the proposed 26 miles of designated forest road and trail are necessary to ensure access, and can be sustained in this forest.

Wetlands and other surface water features were two of many environmental variables examined by the Sandstone Team during the designation process. Seasonal closures are a powerful tool available to the Department to assist in preventing unacceptable environmental impacts to surface waters and wetlands.

See Response 61.6 regarding proximity to St. Croix State Park.

Response 54.7. The 'trail loop' is an important component in providing quality recreational riding opportunities. Opportunities to provide OHV loop trails in the Nemadji will be considered for future trail development.

Response 54.8. See Response 54.7.

Response 54.9. The Sandstone Team believes that the Nemadji State Forest proposal provides a mix of quality recreational opportunities. A well-distributed system of designated OHV trails and motor vehicle routes provides recreational access, while accommodating utilitarian forest users (e.g., hunters, anglers, trappers, harvesters and collectors). The Grant-in-Aid trail system provides a range of opportunities for all skill levels. Future adjustments can and will be made, as necessary, in consultation with affected stakeholders.

Response 54.10. Off-trail or cross-country travel is prohibited in all of Minnesota's State Forests, with the exception of certain hunting and trapping exemptions during open seasons (MN Stat. Chapt. 84.926). Operation on non-motorized trails is specifically prohibited, as is operation in a reckless manner that causes rutting, erosion or vegetative damage. The construction of permanent, unauthorized trails on state lands is also prohibited. Violators are subject to citation and civil and / or criminal penalties.

Response 54.11. This exercise is intended to bring about improved management control of the Pine County forests by limiting OHV and motor vehicle access to designated routes only. This plan will effectively limit future damage by concentrating motorized use on routes judged sustainable by an interdisciplinary DNR team.

Response 54.12. See Response 54.11.

Response 54.13. The Minnesota Legislature has directed the DNR to accommodate OHV activity and has appropriated funding for this purpose. The DNR is committed to providing motorized access in a responsible, sustainable manner. The DNR is cognizant of fiscal limitations and the substantial cost of operating recreational trail systems.

Response 54.14. See 54.13. The DNR Commissioner has determined that vehicle scramble areas, man-made obstacle courses, steep hill climbs, and mudding opportunities are not acceptable on state lands. These activities will not be permitted, except within State Recreation Areas (like the Iron Range OHVRA) established for this purpose.

Response 54.15. Research has repeatedly shown that narrow, tightly woven technical trails are what ORV drivers are looking for. The DNR is committed to providing such opportunities on state forest lands in a responsible, sustainable manner. ORV routes will be located in areas where this use is consistent and compatible with other uses, ecologically sustainable, and in compliance with all existing trail design and development guidelines.

The DNR will provide safe, scenic, and sustainable ORV routes featuring rough terrain, narrow corridors, native vegetation, and natural obstructions (e.g., boulders, fallen trees). Both easy touring and more technical ORV routes will be developed, with some opportunity for off-camber riding. Minimum maintenance routes will also be provided, including loops that “mature” with time becoming more and more challenging with use over time.

Response 54.16. The DNR acknowledges that all recreational trail use carries with it the potential for unintended environmental effects. Regular trail monitoring, maintenance and field enforcement are necessary to ensure that trails do not fall into disrepair or generate unacceptable social or environmental impacts.

## **55. Treadway Hardening**

Response 55.1. Trail hardening is a technique that modifies trail surfaces so they can withstand use without unacceptable impacts to vegetation, soils, hydrology, habitat, or other resource values. One of the major benefits of trail hardening is that it halts trail widening and the development of braided trail systems, which can expand a trail’s footprint. Trail hardening techniques will only be used in locations where other management options have proven ineffective in controlling onsite and/or off-site impacts.

## **56. Trespass**

Response 56.1. Comment noted.

## **57. Unconnected Segments / Dead-End Trails**

Response 57.1. See Responses 57.3, 57.4, and 57.7.

Off-trail travel is prohibited, except for certain hunting and trapping activities. OHVs are permitted to travel only on forest roads and/or trails that are designated and signed open to such use. Violators will be cited and prosecuted.

Response 57.2. See Responses 57.3, 57.4, and 57.7.

Proximity to wetlands and other surface waters were two environmental variables examined by the Sandstone Team during the planning process. Non-designated routes with evidence of motorized use were evaluated based upon these and other environmental criteria. The Department believes the road and trail designations in the Final Plans provide a well-distributed and sustainable system of motorized forest access. Regarding the assertions of “seeking challenges,” see Response 19.2.

Response 57.3. The “southwestern segment between Johnson Creek and East Fork Crooked Creek” is a designated state forest road open to motorized use. This error, in Sections 14 and 22, T43N, R17W, has been corrected.

A “hanging” section occurs in Section 21, T43N, R17W where the trail proposed for designation is accessed by an existing trail on adjacent DNR land in Section 16. Although not clear on the maps, the trail in Section 16 connects to a Township Road. Closure of this segment was considered by the Sandstone Team, but rejected because several routes emanating from this “hanging trail” will also be closed. Leaving a single trail open will allow for sufficient motorized access to this area of the forest.

Regarding the “fragmented” trail segment found in T42N, R16W, this trail does continue through to county-administered land to the east, while connecting the Willard Munger State Trail East to the west. The state trail (indicated in red on the maps) is closed to motorized use. The Final Plan does not recommend any changes to the Munger State Trail at this time. The DNR does intend to revisit this OHV proposal for the Willard Munger State Trail East in the near future.

Response 57.4. The trail section directly north of the “R16W on the map,” does appear to have an isolated segment in Section 7, T42N, R16W. This segment connects to the Willard Munger State Trail East on its western end. If the DNR eventually designates portions of the Munger State Trail (subsequent to this process) for motorized uses, access will also be provided to the segment in question. If, on the other hand, ATV / OHM use is not added to the state trail, then it is likely that this conditional designation would be rescinded.

Regarding the trail near the Black Lake Bog SNA, this segment provides access to private lands as well as the surrounding public lands. This is the basis for the Sandstone Team’s “open” recommendation.

Response 57.5. See Response 54.7. Regarding trails where both ends appear closed on the maps, many of these are artifacts of the mapping exercise, or are indeed errors that have since been fixed. Other “isolated” segments appear on the maps because the Township Road data layer was not shown.

Some previously non-designated routes proposed for designation intersect the Willard Munger State Trail East, which currently allows OHVs on some portions of the trail. Because no change to the state trail is proposed at this time, it shows up on the associated figures as “closed” to OHV use. However, DNR anticipates bringing such a proposal forward in the near future. If OHVs are added as a designated use of the state trail, access to intersecting trails will also become possible. If new motorized uses are not added to the Willard Munger State Trail East, then some of the proposed designations may need to be re-evaluated

A variety of legitimate reasons can exist for designating some dead-end or segmented trails, including use by hunters, anglers, trappers, harvesters, and collectors. In addition to providing motorized access to the forest, private property access was also taken into account. Still other trails may simply appear segmented (on the maps) because they begin, continue, or end on non-state property.

Response 57.6. Cul-de-sacs at the end of some motorized routes will be considered by the Sandstone Team during plan implementation. This feature can be added to those trails where deemed useful and appropriate. Typically, coordination and organization of volunteer efforts takes place through the local DNR Trails and/or Forestry Area Offices. Grant information is available through these same offices.

Response 57.7. See Response 57.3 regarding this specific trail segment.

Response 57.8. The use of an arbitrary standard, such as that offered in the comment, does not provide adequate access for the wide range of visitors to the Nemadji State Forest who use the forest in many different ways.

## 58. Unpermitted Use of Trails

Response 58.1. See Response 10.1.

Response 58.2. The forest route inventory captured those non-designated routes in these (four) forests that exhibit signs of ongoing human (especially motorized) use. Most of these routes resulted from past timber management activity (e.g., timber access routes, skid trails). The routes persist because of repeated use. Very few of these routes are actually “user created.”

Response 58.3. The DNR concurs that OHV management on state forest lands must be improved. The current forest reclassification and trail designation exercise is the first of many steps needed to attain this important objective.

## 59. User Conflict / Incompatible Uses

Response 59.1. In the judgment of the DNR Sandstone Team, this proposal provides reasonable motorized access to most areas of the forest. In so doing, it recognizes the needs and desires of non-motorized constituents to use state forest lands absent motor influences. Surface land-use zoning has not been employed to achieve this “balance.” Clearly, there is no state land allocation decision likely to satisfy all interests. Given the limited size and configuration of the forested land base, it is impossible to completely separate all motor and non-motor use areas. Some level of conflict can be anticipated.

The current condition supports a mix of motorized and non-motor recreation, which is customary for most state forests. This proposal envisions a net forest-wide reduction in motorized road and trail miles. In some cases, substantial (de facto) non-motor areas will result. Motorized forest users will be confined to designated roads and trails, while non-motor forest users may traverse most any route through the forest, designated or not.

Response 59.2. The DNR believes that the Final Plan represents a marked improvement over the current condition. Trail signing, regular trail monitoring, rider education, safety training, and field enforcement will improve conditions. All designated OHV trails will be appropriately signed and mapped within one-year of final plan approval.

Response 59.3. The DNR acknowledges that many Minnesotans find the sounds associated with OHVs to be annoying and objectionable. However, motor vehicle noise has been a component of the forest “soundscape” for many years. Trail designation will not substantially change this condition.

Persons seeking a non-motorized recreation experience are encouraged to visit DNR Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, or State Scientific and Natural Areas. Non-motor experiences can also be found in National Parks, Federal Wildlife Management Areas, or in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in the Superior National Forest. All of these public land management units are non-motorized.

Response 59.4. It is important to note that the mix of both designated motorized and non-motorized trails is the historic condition in each of the Pine County forests. No change in status is proposed for existing system forest roads and designated recreational trails. Area Managers have a good working relationship with forest user groups, and consult on a regular basis. Because motorized use of this area is well established, it is likely that those who dislike motorized use already avoid this area. Some displacement may have already occurred and will persist with or without this proposal. See Response 29.2 for a discussion of multiple-use trail management generally.

## 60. Wetland / Riparian Areas / Trout Waters

Response 60.1. Legislative changes in 2004 to MS Chap. 84.773 removed the prohibition on OHV operation in type 3, 4, 5, and 8 wetlands. Current law permits operation in wetlands subject to Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) regulations (MS Chap.103G.2241). Under WCA, impacts to all types of wetlands, not just type 3,4, 5, and 8, will be considered. If damage results, the law invokes a *de minimis* provision that allows for minimal impact (up to 400 sq. ft). In counties with 80% or more of their pre-settlement wetlands, the *de minimis* threshold may be higher with

County Board approval. Careless, reckless or unsafe operation remain unlawful and are punishable by criminal citation, fines and restitution.

Cattail cover is not thought to provide important winter cover for any species of wildlife.

Response 60.2. The DNR agrees that wetland protection is important. Every effort has been made to avoid and/or minimize wetland encroachment throughout this route designation process.

Response 60.3. See Response 60.2.

Response 60.4. The closing of some existing motor routes was done, in part, to reduce wetland impacts. Designated roads and trails will be improved or realigned to avoid or reduce wetland impacts. Trail monitoring, maintenance, and enforcement will ensure that wetlands are protected over time.

Response 60.5. Comment noted.

Response 60.6. Comment noted. See Response 54.6.

Response 60.7. See Response 57.3 regarding the specific trail segments referenced in the comment. The Sandstone Team closed many trails that dead-ended at wetlands. These locations will be signed to prohibit vehicular operation. Education through enforcement will be the mechanism used to discourage off-trail riding and to encourage use of designated trails.

Response 60.8. See Response 60.7.

Response 60.9. The majority of trails in these areas were closed in an effort to protect the Snake and St. Croix River corridors. Enforcement will be focused on the need to protect these areas over the longer term. See Response 60.7.

Response 60.10. The DNR concurs that wetlands are important and sensitive natural resources. The need to avoid and/or minimize the potential for impacts was a key factor behind the closure of many existing routes. The team evaluated each route to assess whether motorized use could be sustained. Existing routes that encroached into wetlands, or where public access was provided via other routes, were "ended" to protect wetland habitat.

Impact avoidance measures, such as reroutes, treadway hardening or bridging were also considered. The DNR will comply with all wetland-related permit requirements or conditions as trail-related work gets underway. Site-level determinations and delineations will be made on a case-by-case basis during plan implementation.

Response 60.11. See Response 60.10.

Response 60.12. See Response 60.10.

Response 60.13. The process employed by the Sandstone Team protects natural resources, including designated trout streams. Route designations will have minimal impact on aquatic or terrestrial resources. Routes judged to adversely impact aquatic resources were closed under the Final Plan.

Response 60.14. There is no universal setback from designated trout streams. Best Management Practices (BMPs) do prescribe measures needed to avoid negative impacts. The Sandstone Team sought to protect trout streams by protecting the "riparian zone" along these waterways. The team actively sought to minimize or eliminate routes that were located within or proximate to this riparian zone.

For the purpose of this exercise, the riparian zone was defined as ten times the median bank-full width on each stream, plus an additional 50 feet on each side of the stream. This definition will, in most cases: 1) Include the 50-year flood plain, the base of the upland terrace eroded by a 50-year flood, and encompass site potential tree height at most locations; 2) Provide sufficient width to filter most sediment from non-channeled surface runoff from slopes; 3) Provide microclimate and shallow groundwater thermal buffering to protect aquatic habitats inside the channel; and 4) Provide an appropriate margin of error for unanticipated channel movement, hill slope and soil instability, blow down, wildfire, operator error, disease, and certain other events that are difficult or impossible to foresee. Most trails within this riparian zone were ultimately eliminated.

Stream crossings were of a particular concern for the Sandstone Team because trail crossings can promote localized erosion and downstream geomorphic degradation. Therefore, all road and trail stream crossings over designated trout waters will be bridged over the full stream width. Ongoing trail monitoring and maintenance will ensure that streams are protected.

Response 60.15. The Department has not established objective criteria to attain this objective. The forest road and trail designations in the Final Plans represent a net reduction in total motorized forest access. When coupled with increased maintenance, monitoring, and field enforcement, the potential for impacts to sensitive trout stream and riparian resources will be greatly reduced.

Response 60.16. See Response 60.10.

Response 60.17. The DNR concurs that the illegal operation of motor vehicles in wetlands, streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes can damage these sensitive resources. Willful rutting or damage to trees, vegetation or growing crops on state forest lands is prohibited, as is operation in public waters. Careless or reckless OHV operators will be cited and prosecuted. The DNR believes that the Final Plans represent a marked improvement upon the current situation in the Pine County forests. The potential for illegal or unauthorized riding is greatly reduced by limiting travel to designated roads and trails.

## **61. Wild and Scenic River Corridors, State Parks, & Wildlife Management Areas**

Response 61.1. The Wild and Scenic River District for the Kettle River is not located near the Nemadji State Forest.

Response 61.2. There have been no recommendations or discussions regarding expanding the boundaries of St. Croix State Park. This noted, the proposed designations do not foreclose on future opportunities to do so.

Response 61.3. The Final Plans eliminate most motor routes in close proximity to St. Croix State Park, and all motor routes near Rock Marsh Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

Response 61.4. Several miles of existing motor routes are closed under the Final Plan in order to reduce the potential for canoeists to be annoyed by OHV-generated noise. See Responses 27.10 and 32.4.

Response 61.5. No trail designations are proposed within the Wild and Scenic River Districts. Motorized trail development is not a permitted use within these federal and state districts. A primary rationale for establishing the District is to provide a minimum separation between river users and noise generated by activity occurring on lands adjacent to the district. In this case, the St. Croix State Forest abuts the District, and as a working forest, it hosts various activities that generate noise (e.g., timber harvest; rock crushing; hunting; motorized use of the forest roads and designated trails). Noise from these activities is largely mitigated by vegetation, topography, and distance.

The trails noted in the vicinity of the Lower Tamarack River are designated non-motorized trails, principally used for horseback and/or hiking activity. The DNR meets periodically with National Park Service staff to discuss issues of joint management interest, including the operation of motorized trails in both the Chengwatana and St. Croix State Forests. See Response 27.10.

Response 61.6. In the Chengwatana State Forest, the Sandstone Team has recommended that non-designated routes in the vicinity of St. Croix State Park retain this (closed) status. The final route designations reduce the possibility of accidental or unintentional entry into the park. The Final Plan also results in a net reduction in noise-related impacts to park users. There have been no recommendations or discussions regarding expanding the boundaries of St. Croix State Park. The proposed designations do not foreclose on future opportunities to do so.

Response 61.7. See Response 61.6.

Response 61.8. No motor route designations are planned within the boundaries of the St. Croix River Wild and Scenic River District or within St. Croix State Park. It is possible that campers may hear noise generated by OHVs operating on the trail system. Although no violations of state noise standards are anticipated, it is possible some may find this noise objectionable. Noise will be mitigated by vegetation, topography and distance.

Response 61.9. No trail designations are proposed within the Wild and Scenic River District. State Canoe and Boating Routes do not have associated land-use districts. See Responses 61.5, 27.10, and 32.4.

Response 61.10. No trail designations are proposed within the Kettle River Wild and Scenic River District. Motorized trail development is not a permitted use within the District. See Response 61.9.

Response 61.11. The Pine County State Game Refuge #3, which was formerly located within the St. Croix State Forest, was abandoned by the DNR in 1995. It no longer exists as a DNR management unit.

Response 61.12. Comments noted. Regarding trails along or in close proximity to the St. Croix State Park, see Responses 61.3 and 61.6. All WMAs in Pine County (and elsewhere in MN) are closed to OHV use. Enforcement action will be taken as appropriate.

Response 61.13. Regarding the Kettle River, see Response 61.5. Spider Lake and Bungo Creek are located in the Foot Hills State Forest, which is located in Cass County, Minnesota. This is beyond the scope of the current plan.

## **62. Willow River Area**

Response 62.1. A large portion of the General C.C. Andrews State Forest is already designated as non-motor; mostly in the two forest sub-areas located in the vicinity of Dago Lake. The Final Plan closes several additional motor routes in order to improve non-motor recreational experiences in these sub areas. This request to make the entire area south of the Willow River a non-motorized zone was rejected by the Sandstone Team due to the non-motor opportunities that already exist in the area.

## **63. Winter Riding**

Response 63.1. Winter ATV riding is permitted on forest roads, on some unit snowmobile trails, and on most unit OHV trails. Winter ATV riding is not typically allowed on grant-in-aid snowmobile trails primarily due to land ownership issues.

## **64. Miscellaneous**

Response 64.1. Comment noted.

*PineROD.Doc*  
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