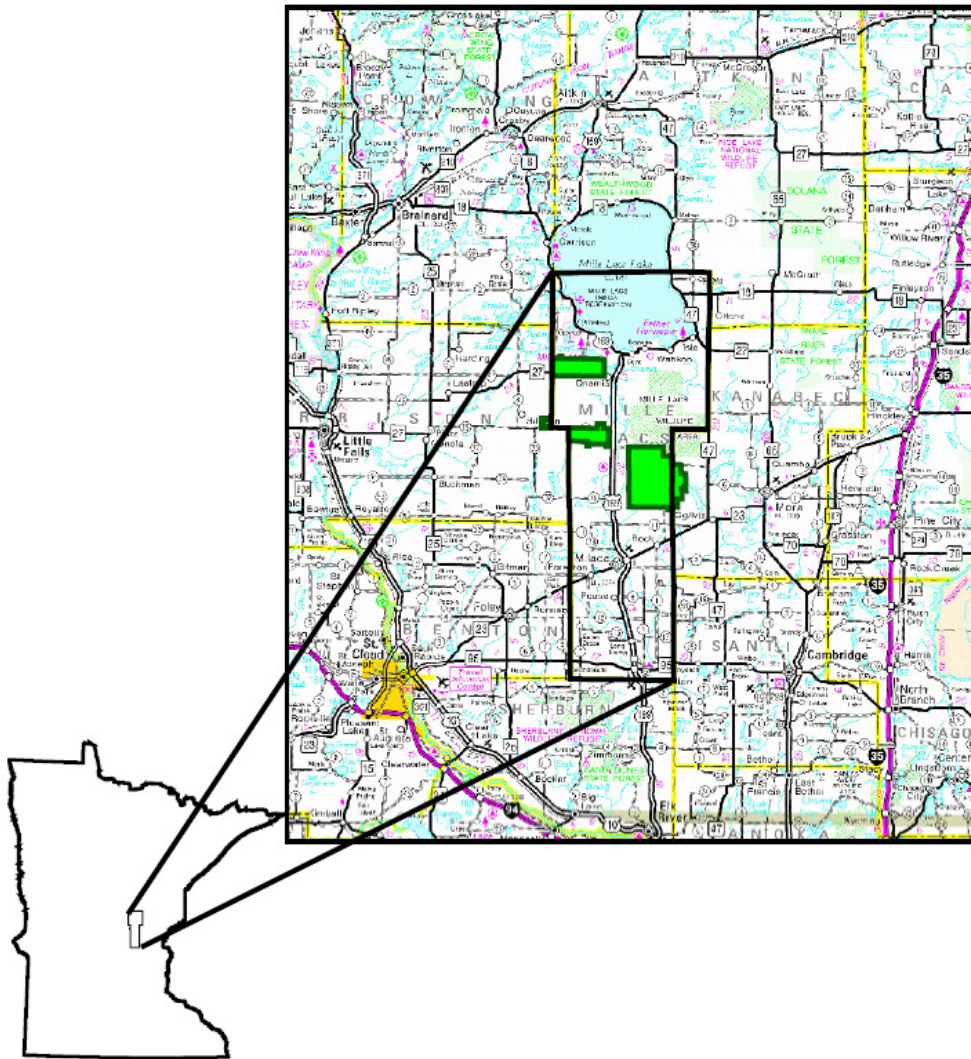


Forest Classification & Motor Route Designation Plan for the Rum River State Forest

Final Plan
December 19, 2006



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

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

This plan documents the outcome of that evaluation, and identifies those forest roads and trails that the DNR will officially (un)designate for various motorized purposes within the Rum River State Forest. Accordingly, the use of motor vehicles (e.g., All-Terrain Vehicles or **ATVs**, Off-highway Motorcycles or **OHMs**, Off-Road Vehicles or **ORVs**, and highway Licensed Vehicles or **HLVs**) in the Rum River State Forest will henceforth be limited to only those roads and trails that are specifically signed and/or designated for their use.

Lands Covered by this Plan

The Rum River State Forest is located in Mille Lacs, Morrison and Kanabec Counties in North-Central Minnesota. State-owned, DNR forestry-administered lands located within the statutory forest boundaries are addressed in this plan. Lands located outside forest boundaries in Kanabec and Morrison Counties will be addressed in a subsequent planning effort.

Legislative changes to the statutory boundary of the Rum River State Forest in 2006 added a gross area of 6,538 acres, about 3,637 acres of which is state-owned, forestry-administered land. A total of 9.1 miles of routes were inventoried on these (formerly) scattered lands, all of which were evaluated by the planning team. Eight of these nine miles occur in Mille Lacs County, with the remainder in Kanabec County.

Ownership. This forest classification and road and trail designation plan covers all of the DNR forestry-administered lands within the statutory boundaries of the Rum River State Forest. The statutory boundaries of the forest now encompass 39,538 acres, of which about half or 20,726 acres are administered by the DNR. Most of the remaining land within the forest is privately owned. The forest is easily accessed by Twin Cities Metro Area residents via U.S. Highway 169.

The main portion of the Rum River State Forest is located in East-Central Mille Lacs and Western Kanabec Counties, immediately south of the Mille Lacs Wildlife Management Area. A smaller disjunct portion of the forest is located west of Onamia along State Highway 27, just south of Mille Lacs Kathio State Park. There are also some 6,500 acres of discontinuous parcels of land located variously in Mille Lacs County (2,917 ac.), Morrison County (640 ac.), and Kanabec County (80 ac.) that are all now a part of the Rum River State Forest. These parcels range between 40 and 1,500 acres in size and are surrounded by private land. OHV use is primarily by local utilitarian riders.

Most of the public land in the forest is former private farmland that was tax-forfeited when the land proved unsuitable for agricultural use. The forest is fairly level with the exception of a glacial esker in the southern portion of the forest. The predominant soils are fine textured sandy to silty loams, and organic to mucky peat soils of glacial origin. A hardpan layer in the soil limits movement of water through the soil profile, resulting in poorly drained soils that have water at or near the surface much of the year. Hardwoods are the predominant forest cover.

County & Municipal Lands. Mille Lacs County administers 16 acres within the forest. Under state law, Mille Lacs County lands within the Rum River State Forest are to be managed similarly to the state forest lands (i.e., closed unless posted open; no off-trail travel allowed), unless the County specifies a different management approach for its lands. The City of Onamia also administers 20 acres of land in the northern block of the Rum River State Forest.

Motor Vehicle Use Classification

The Rum River Field Project Team recommended, and the Commissioner agreed, to retain a '*limited*' classification for state and county-administered forest lands within the Rum River State Forest. This judgment is based upon the Team's analysis of the eight criteria contained in *MR 6100.1950, Subp. 1-4* which guide the classification of forest lands for motor vehicle use. The team's analysis of these eight criteria, labeled A-H, is as follows.

A. Resource Sensitivity and Management Objectives

Management objectives for the Rum River forest include timber production, wildlife habitat improvement, and providing a mix of outdoor recreation opportunities. The recently completed Subsection Forest Resource Management Plan for the area (including the Rum) also specifies goals pertaining to forest management for greater biological diversity, improved forest spatial patterns, and increased public involvement and collaboration.

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

Sensitive natural resources within the Rum River State Forest, including wetlands and wildlife impoundments, surface water features (e.g., Groundhouse River), rare plant and animal species, and unique geologic features like the Esker Area, are among the resources most affected by motor vehicle use. The North Unit of the Rum River State Forest has a relatively high concentration of rare plant and animal records. Eight sites of biodiversity significance occur in the forest, with a total area of 19,603 acres. These sites include significant native plant communities, the esker and tunnel valley geologic features, and populations of six state-listed rare species, including nesting trumpeter swans and timber wolves. As visitor numbers increase, it is increasingly important to control and regulate vehicular use of the forest to avoid unintentional damage to these sensitive resources.

B. Resource Impact by Motorized and Nonmotorized Use

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

Trail users can also impact wildlife populations, both directly and indirectly. Some wildlife may avoid habitat near trails, while improved hunter access may increase hunting pressure leading to reduced wildlife population levels. The type and extent of impacts vary by activity, by species and by season.

Recreational trail development is both difficult and costly due to the wet nature of both the lowland and many of the upland soils found throughout the Rum River State Forest. Still, there was concern that a '*closed*' classification would preclude all future development of OHV trails, and trail connections through the forest. It would also unduly restrict seasonal hunter/trapper use of ATVs and (high-clearance) HLVs to very few miles of designated state forest roads. Undesignated routes cannot be used by OHVs or motor vehicles, not even seasonally, in a closed forest.

C. Motorized and Non-motorized Recreational Opportunity in Area

Outdoor recreational opportunities in Kanabec and Mille Lacs Counties are summarized in Table 4 (Pg. 16). There are a mix of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities in the area. There are many miles of designated snowmobile trails in and around the Rum River State Forest, but no DNR-designated OHV trails. Designated ATV

trails proximate to the forest include the Soo Line South Trail (crosses state forest land) and the Red Top Trail. The Rum River Forest may someday host trail links connecting ATV riders from the Twin Cities Metro Area to the Soo Line/Red Top ATV trail systems.

Team Members were concerned that a 'closed' classification would close the forest to all ATV use, including use on State Forest Roads. Seasonal use of ATVs and HLVs on undesignated routes for big game hunting, trapping and game retrieval would also be prohibited. Under the 'limited' classification, licensed big-game hunters and trappers can use ATVs or HLVs on undesignated routes during established seasons. ATVs may also travel off-trail for hunting or trapping-related purposes. Such use was deemed manageable and sustainable.

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

There will be little or no change in designated trails, roads, or parking areas regardless of the forest classification. Still, some additional signs will be posted at parking areas, along forest roads, and along the perimeter of the Esker Area. The signs will inform users of the 'limited' classification and implications for the use of motor vehicles in the forest. Non-motorized access to the forest is largely unaffected by forest classification. Motorized access, except for snowmobiles, will be substantially reduced both due to the Esker Area exclusion, and because motor vehicles will no longer be allowed to use the 61.6 miles of non-designated routes, except pursuant to MS 84.926..

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

Snowmobiling is a popular recreational use of the Rum River State Forest. Designated snowmobile trails include almost 23 miles of grant-in-aid trail through the forest, and other connecting grant-in-aid snowmobile trails in the surrounding area.

Off-highway Vehicle use has increased in recent years, even though there are no state-designated OHV trails in the Rum River State Forest. ATVs are the most commonly used OHV in the forest. The majority of the use is by local riders, who live near the forest and enter the forest from public roads or private lands, and by hunters. The Soo Line South and the Red Top are the closest designated ATV trails (the Soo Line ATV Trail crosses a portion of the Rum). Both are grant-in-aid trails. Future OHV use on public lands in the area will depend upon total miles of available trail, the quality of the riding experience, trail connectivity, and the availability of ancillary facilities (e.g., campsites, toilets). Traffic levels may also be impacted by forest reclassification. Those seeking to explore unsigned, unmapped routes will no longer have that opportunity in the Rum River Forest given its '*limited*' classification.

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

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

There is one seasonal non-motor recreational trail in the Rum River State Forest. However, non-motorized trail opportunities abound on the nearby Daily Township scattered parcels, at Father Hennepin State Park, Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, Mille Lacs WMA and the Onamia to Isle segment of the Soo Line South Trail. Undesignated trails used by hikers, bikers, cross-country skiers and horseback riders are also located throughout the area.

Those who currently use OHVs in the Rum River Forest on undesignated routes will be displaced by a *limited* classification with no new OHV trail designations. Still, Team Members concluded that existing forest roads do provide reasonable motor access to most areas of the forest. Despite this net reduction in motorized use, those seeking solitude might prefer a still more restrictive '*closed*' forest classification.

G. Competing Interests among Different User Groups

There exists a broad diversity of values and expectations related to use of public lands. Conflicts can and do occur. Given the limited size and irregular pattern of state land ownership in this area it is impossible to completely separate motorized and non-motorized forest users. It is clear that there is no public land allocation strategy that will fully satisfy all interests. Some level of conflict is inevitable.

Classification of State Forest Lands, with respect to recreational motor vehicle use, is not the only means, nor even the primary tool for managing conflict among forest users. A mix of both motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities can co-exist in most forests, regardless of classification. Provisions exist under the law to 'close' state forests to all motor use, to create de facto non-motor areas within (otherwise managed) forests, and to either eliminate or provide for special hunter/trapper access. The Rum River OHV Field Team believes that the 'limited' classification, with no OHV trail designations and special protections for the Esker/Tunnel Valley Area, balances the desire for adequate motor access to the forest with the need to protect natural resource values.

H. Public Safety and Law Enforcement Concerns

The 'limited' classification will reduce permitted OHV route mileages within the forest. Any route not posted open will effectively be closed to OHV use. Seasonal HLV use of undesignated routes and off-trail ATV use pursuant to *MN Stat. Chap. 84.926*, does complicate the enforcement picture by relaxing operating rules for big-game hunters and trappers during certain times of the year. The Esker/Tunnel Valley Area OHV riding prohibition (below) may prove challenging to enforce, despite the added signing, because of its long history of vehicular use.

Esker / Tunnel Valley Non-Motorized Area

The Commissioner has invoked authority granted him pursuant to *MN Stat. Chap. 84.926, Subd. 5*, in order to preclude vehicular use within the 570-acre Esker/Tunnel Valley Area Complex (Appendix D). By so doing, state forest lands, which encompass a large portion of the Esker/Tunnel Valley Area Complex, is no longer subject to the exceptions provided for in *MN Stat. Chap. 84.926 Subd. 2 & 4*, which would otherwise allow for ATV and HLV use of undesignated routes (ATVs may also travel off-trail) for certain hunting and trapping purposes.

All trail access and entry points, and the Esker/Tunnel Valley Area boundaries themselves, will be mapped and posted 'closed' to vehicular use. Designated State Forest Roads within the Esker/Tunnel Valley Area will remain open to OHV and HLV use, subject to possible temporary closures or seasonal use restrictions. However, no off-road OHV or HLV use of undesignated routes in the Esker/Tunnel Valley Area will be permitted at any time.

This prohibition applies only to this specified area, and only to the use of ATVs and HLVs during legal hunting and trapping seasons. It does not modify the 'limited' forest classification of the larger Rum River State Forest. Vehicular use of State Forest Roads and/or grant-in-aid snowmobile trail use (by snowmobiles) will be unaffected. However, future road and trail development proposals through this sensitive area will be evaluated very carefully through the department's interdisciplinary project review process, since vehicular trail use is fundamentally inconsistent with the management objectives that prompted these special protections.

Summary of Existing Access Routes

The forest road and trail inventory was updated in 2003. It is summarized in Table 1 and shown in Appendix D. The 2003 inventory tallied a total of 79.2 miles of routes within the Rum River State Forest; all of which is located on state-administered forest lands.

Final Road & Trail Designations

As a *limited* forest with respect to motor vehicle use, all access routes that are not designated as State Forest System Roads, Minimum Maintenance Roads or Recreational Trails will be closed to vehicular use upon the effective date of this plan. Undesignated routes may be used seasonally by ATVs and HLVs for certain big-game hunting and

trapping purposes (except in the Esker/Tunnel Valley Non-Motorized Area), subject to state land rutting and damage prohibitions. These designations will become effective on September 1, 2007.

State Forest Road Designations

State Forest Roads (SFRs) in the Rum River State Forest will remain open to OHV and HLV use, subject to temporary closures or seasonal restrictions. This is consistent with state forest road policy, state statute and rules. Forest roads in the Rum River Forest, which serve mostly utilitarian and local OHV users, are surfaced and graded and can sustain vehicular traffic, except during spring thaw or heavy precipitation events. Temporary closures will be instituted as necessary to protect public safety, natural resources, and the integrity of the roads themselves.

Recreational Trail Designations

No existing inventoried routes will be designated as OHV trails at this time. This is due to the large portion of the forest classified as 'wetlands' and the perched water table conditions that result from the subsurface hardpan that restricts surface water drainage. This condition is common on upland soils throughout the forest. In Mille Lacs County, naturally-occurring wetlands tend to be large and contiguous, as opposed to isolated wet depressions. Rutting is problematic in these soils during much of the frost-free period of the year.

Snowmobile trails were not evaluated during this process. Consequently, there are no planned changes to the 22.7 miles of designated snowmobile trails that currently exist in the forest.

Non-designated Routes

The plan is to leave 61.6 miles of forest access routes non-designated. These routes will not be maintained for any recreational use but may be used on occasion for natural resource management access. Over time these routes may become blocked by deadfalls or revegetate naturally, thereby obliterating the corridor.

Table 1. Summary of Final Road & Trail Designations in the Rum River State Forest.

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, 2006. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Trail Summary Report	January 10 2006
Category	Miles of Road / Trail
Total Inventoried Routes	79.2 Miles
All-Terrain Vehicle <u>Only</u>	0.0 Miles
All All-Terrain Vehicle Routes	18.1 Miles
Off-Highway Motorcycle <u>Only</u> Routes	0.0 Miles
All Off-highway Motorcycle Routes	18.1 Miles
Off-Road Vehicle <u>Only</u> Routes	0.0 Miles
All Off-Road Vehicle Routes	18.1 Miles
Highway-Licensed Vehicle <u>Only</u> Routes	0.0 Miles
All Highway Licensed Vehicle Routes	18.1 Miles
Grant-in-Aid Snowmobile Trail	22.7 Miles
Hunter Walking Trails	0.0 Miles
Number of Gated Trails	None
Total Non-Designated Routes	61.6 Miles
Total Motorized Routes	18.1 Miles
System State Forest Roads	16.2 Miles
Minimum Maint. State Forest Roads	1.9 Miles

Introduction

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

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

Process

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

1. Inventory existing forest access routes on state and county-administered forest lands within the Rum River State Forest. Check this data for accuracy and completeness.
2. Consider the criteria for classification of forest lands for motor vehicle use and recommend either keeping the current *limited* classification, or changing to *closed*, as per motor vehicle use.
3. Evaluate existing forest access routes using the Rapid Environmental Assessment Checklist. Determine which of these routes is capable of sustaining continued motorized use.
4. Present the team's recommendations for road and trail use designations and forest reclassification for public review and comment.
5. Public review and comment was solicited and incorporated into the final plan.
6. This process wrapped-up in December 2006 with final classification and designation orders signed by the DNR Commissioner. These orders become effective on September 1, 2007.

Description of Lands Covered by the Plan

Established in 1963, the Rum River State Forest is located in Mille Lacs, Morrison and Kanabec Counties in North-Central Minnesota. State-owned, DNR forestry-administered lands located within the statutory forest boundaries are addressed in this plan. Lands located outside forest boundaries in Kanabec County will be addressed in a subsequent planning effort.

Ownership. This forest road and trail designation plan covers all of the DNR forestry-administered lands within the statutory boundaries of the Rum River State Forest. The statutory boundaries of the forest encompass 39,538 acres, of which about half or 20,726 acres are administered by the DNR. Most of the remaining land within the forest is privately owned. The forest is easily accessed by Twin Cities area residents via US Highway 169.

The main portion of the Rum River State Forest is located in East-Central Mille Lacs and Western Kanabec Counties, immediately south of the Mille Lacs Wildlife Management Area. A smaller disjunct portion of the forest is located west of Onamia along State Highway 27, just south of Mille Lacs Kathio State Park. There are also some 6,500 acres of discontinuous parcels of land located variously in Mille Lacs County (2,917 ac.), Morrison County (640 ac.), and Kanabec County (80 ac.) that are all a part of the Rum River State Forest. These parcels range between 40 and 1,500 acres in size and are surrounded by private land. OHV use is primarily by local utilitarian riders.

Legislative changes to the statutory boundary of the Rum River State Forest in 2006 added a gross area of 6,538 acres, about 3,637 acres of which is state-owned, forestry-administered land. A total of 9.1 miles of routes were inventoried on these (formerly) scattered lands, all of which were evaluated by the planning team. Eight of these nine miles occur in Mille Lacs County, with the remainder in Kanabec County.

Most of the public land in the forest is former private farmland that was tax-forfeited when the land proved unsuitable for agricultural use. The forest is fairly level with the exception of a glacial esker in the southern portion of the forest.

The predominant soils are fine textured sandy to silty loams, and organic to mucky peat soils of glacial origin. A hardpan layer in the soil limits movement of water through the soil profile, resulting in poorly drained soils that have water at or near the surface much of the year. Hardwoods are the predominant forest cover.

County & Municipal Lands. Mille Lacs County administers 16 acres within the forest. Under state law, Mille Lacs County lands within the Rum River State Forest are to be managed similarly to the state forest lands (i.e., closed unless posted open; no off-trail travel allowed), unless the County specifies a different management approach for its lands. The City of Onamia also administers 20 acres of land in the northern block of the Rum River State Forest.

This plan does not address scattered forestry-administered lands in Kanabec County (about 3,000 acres), or DNR Fish & Wildlife-administered lands in the Mille Lacs Wildlife Management Area (about 36,769 acres) which is located adjacent to the forest. About one-third of the land within the Rum River State Forest boundary is privately owned. This plan does not address private lands located within the forest. Nor does it address lands located within public road rights-of-way.

Natural Resources Assessment

Landforms and Vegetation

The Ecological Classification System (ECS) maps ecosystems at various scales using climatic, geologic, topographic, hydrologic, soils and vegetation data. The ECS helps describe and manage ecosystems. The Rum River State Forest is part of the Laurentian Mixed Forest Province, a mixed conifer and hardwood forest that covers much of northeastern Minnesota. The topography is variable with landforms ranging from lake plains and outwash plains, to ground and end moraines. Both stagnation moraines and calcareous till plains are common features of this landscape.

Prior to settlement, the Laurentian Mixed Forest province consisted of continuous conifer, conifer-hardwood mix, or hardwood forest vegetation. Peatland areas were inhabited by sedge-fen, black spruce-sphagnum, or white cedar-black ash communities.

The Rum River State Forest is located within the Mille Lacs Uplands ecological subsection of the Laurentian Mixed Forest Province. This subsection covers a large area of Superior Lobe ground moraine and end moraine in east central Minnesota. Gently rolling till plains and drumlin fields are the dominant landforms in this ecoregion. Brown and red till forms the soil parent material. Forestry, recreation, and some limited agriculture are the most common land uses in the area today.

Land Type Associations. There are three landtype associations (LTA) within the Rum River State Forest. The Northern Unit of the State Forest is located in the Kathio Moraine LTA. The Kathio Moraine is characterized by rolling end moraine. Just over 54 percent of this LTA is classified as upland; the remainder is predominantly lowlands, wetlands and lakes. Soils are poorly drained due to a subsurface hardpan.

The south portion of the Southern Unit of the forest is in the Milaca Till Plain LTA. The remainder of the forest is in the Ann Lake Drumlin Plain. The Ann Lake Drumlin Plain is characterized by rolling hills. Long, cigar-shaped ridges with a southwest-northeast orientation are common. About 70 percent of the Southern Unit is upland; the remainder is comprised of wetlands, lowlands or lakes. Upland soils are poorly drained due to a subsurface hardpan. The esker and tunnel valley geologic features are located in the Ann Lake Drumlin Plain LTA.

At the eastern end of the subsection, the end moraines and ground moraines have loamy soils. Typically, there is dense glacial till underlying most soils in this subsection. This dense till impedes water movement throughout the soil profile. Soils are described as acid stony, reddish sandy loams, silt loams, and loamy sands. The glacial parent material in the Grantsburg sub-lobe (Des Moines Lobe) portion of the subsection is more calcareous and finer textured than Superior Lobe sediments. It is underlain by Superior Lobe drift which is locally exposed. The soils are

classified as Boralfs (i.e., well-drained soils developed under forest vegetation) and Ochrepts (i.e., poorly developed soils formed under forest vegetation) on the moraines.

Soils. Soils in the remainder of the forest are in the Alfisol, Entisol, or Histosol orders. Dominant soil types include the Mora-Brennyville (164B), Bennyville-Cebana Complex (464A), Seelyville and Clathro Complex (3155), and Greenwood Mucky Peat (3170). All but the Mora-Brennyville are poorly drained with an average depth to water table of less than one-foot. Surface water run-off is typically slow, resulting in surface ponding following precipitation events or spring snowmelt. These are very flat landforms with an average slope of less than three percent. These soils are most often found on level to near-level ground.

The Mora-Brennyville, on the other hand, is moderately well-drained with a perched water table of more than two feet. Surface run-off is slow, like the other soils found on the forest, but the typical slope is slightly higher at 1- 5 %. The Esker/Tunnel Valley Area contains the majority of the Mora-Brennyville soil type within the Rum River Forest.

Sites of Biodiversity Significance

A total of eight sites designated by the Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS) as ‘significant’ occur in the Rum River State Forest, including one site on the Kanabec County side and seven on the Mille Lacs County side. Four of the latter are in the North Unit, and the remaining three are in the south unit. Table 2 provides a listing of the sites, their biodiversity significance rankings, and a summary of the rare features that occur in each. It should be noted that the data have not been finalized for Kanabec County, so the biodiversity significance ranking should be considered preliminary. All sites assigned a biodiversity significance rank are considered significant. The ranks are assigned on a continuum from outstanding to high to moderate based on size, context, quality of native plant communities, and populations of rare species. See Appendix D for a map of Biodiversity Sites within the Rum River State Forest.

Table 2. Sites of Biodiversity Significance & Rare Features in the Rum River State Forest

[Source: Hannah Texler, Regional Plant Ecologist, DNR Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program, Jan. 2006]

MCBS Site Number & Site Name	Biodiversity Significance	Rare Features [*NPCs = Native Plant Communities]
North Unit – Mille Lacs County		
15 - Shakopee - Onamia Lakes	High	NPCs
17 - Kathio Moraine Southwest	Outstanding	NPCs, red-shouldered hawk
18 - Kathio South Central Lowlands	Outstanding	NPCs, red-shouldered hawk, rare plants
20 - Kathio South 29	Outstanding	NPCs, red-shouldered hawk, bald eagle
South Unit - Mille Lacs County		
83 - Two Headwaters	Moderate	NPCs
85 - Mille Lacs Esker	High	NPCs, esker, tunnel valley, Blanding's turtle, rare plants
86 - Rum River State Forest South	Moderate	NPCs, red-shouldered hawk, Blanding's turtle, rare plants
South Unit - Kanabec County		
125 - (Site not named)	High (prelim.)	NPCs, esker, tunnel valley, rare plants

Rare Species

A total of seven species tracked by the Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) have been documented in the Rum River State Forest, including three animal species and four plant species. The animal species are bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), state special concern and federally threatened; Blanding's turtles (*Emydoidea blandingii*), state threatened; and red-shouldered hawks (*Buteo lineatus*), state special concern. Documented occurrences include one bald eagle record, three red-shouldered hawk records, and two Blanding's turtle records in the state forest. Habitat for these three species exists throughout much of the state forest. Nesting Trumpeter Swans and Timber Wolves are also known to occur in the area.

Four plant species tracked by the NHIS have been documented in the Rum River State Forest. Three are species of special concern: butternut (*Juglans cinerea*), Wood's sedge (*Carex woodii*), and least moonwort (*Botrychium simplex*). These are all species characteristic of mesic deciduous forests. The fourth, halberd-leaved tearthumb (*Polygonum arifolium*), an open wetland species, has no state status, but is tracked in the NHIS data base.

Geologic Features

Two geologic features tracked in the NHIS occur in the Rum River State Forest, an esker and a tunnel valley. The esker is one of 13 recorded in the Natural Heritage Information System in Minnesota. This is one of the longest and best-formed esker/tunnel valley systems in central Minnesota, according to Heather Anderson, a DNR Geologist who is currently mapping the surficial geology of Mille Lacs County.

Native Plant Communities

Seventeen native plant community types have been mapped and described in the Rum River State Forest by the Minnesota County Biological Survey. They are listed in Table 3, along with the class name for each type, and the nomenclature code. Names and codes are assigned according to Minnesota's Native Plant Community Classification (Version 2.0). All native plant communities mapped by MCBS met minimum size and quality criteria to be considered significant.

Table 3. Native Plant Communities Mapped by MCBS in the Rum River State Forest.

[Source: Hannah Texler, Regional Plant Ecologist, DNR Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program, Jan. 2006]

Class Name	Type Name	Code
Central Dry-Mesic Oak-Aspen Forest	Red Oak - Sugar Maple - Basswood - (Lge-Flowered Trillium) Forest	MHc26b
Central Mesic Hardwood Forest (Eastern)	Red Oak - Basswood Forest (Noncalcareous Till)	MHc36a
Central Wet-Mesic Hardwood Forest	Basswood - Black Ash Forest	MHc47a
Northern Wet-Mesic Hardwood Forest	Aspen - Ash Forest	MHn46a
Northern Rich Mesic Hardwood Forest	Sugar Maple - Basswood - (Bluebead Lily) Forest	MHn47a
Northern Rich Tamarack Swamp (Eastern Basin)	Rich Tamarack Swamp (Eastcentral)	FPn72a
Northern Rich Alder Swamp	Alder - (Maple - Loosestrife) Swamp	FPn73a
Northern Wet Ash Swamp	Black Ash - Yellow Birch - Red Maple - Basswood Swamp	WFn55b
Northern Very Wet Ash Swamp	Black Ash - Yellow Birch - Red Maple - Alder Swamp	WFn64b
Northern Poor Conifer Swamp	Poor Black Spruce Swamp	APn81a
Northern Poor Conifer Swamp	Poor Tamarack - Black Spruce swamp	APn81b
Northern Poor Fen	Low Shrub Poor Fen	APn91a
Northern Poor Fen	Graminoid Poor Fen	APn91b
Northern Shrub Shore Fen	Bog Birch - Alder Shore Fen	OPn81a
Northern Wet Meadow/Carr	Willow - Dogwood Shrub Swamp	WMn82a
Northern Wet Meadow/Carr	Sedge Meadow	WMn82b
Northern Mixed Cattail Marsh		MRn83

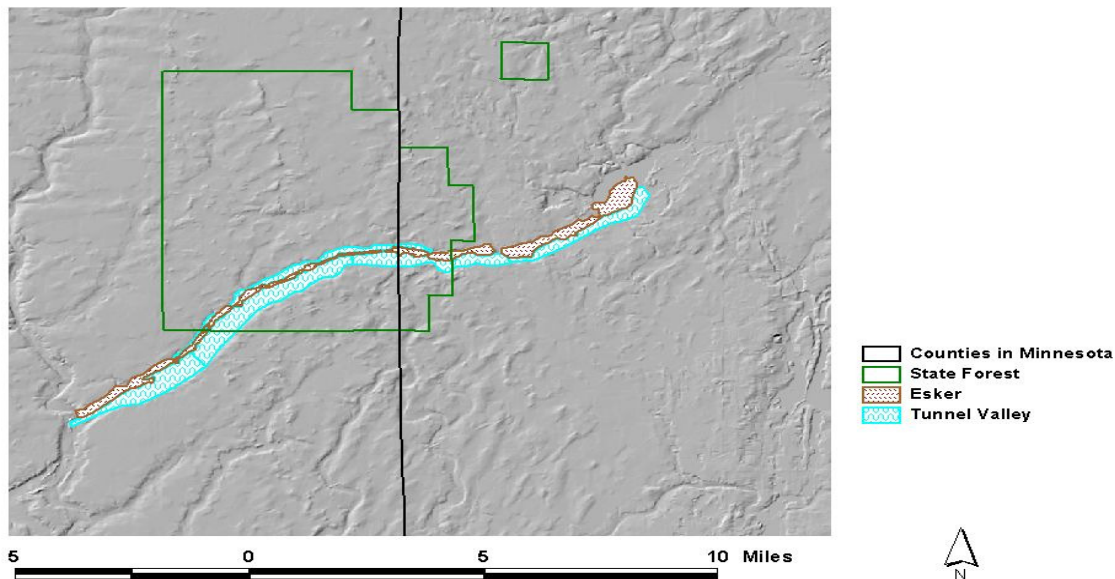
The Esker & Tunnel Valley Complex. This area, on State Lands within the Rum River State Forest, which features a glacial esker, is approximately 570 acres in size. It is but a small portion of a much larger esker formation that lies in a northeast to southwest orientation in the southern part of the Southern Unit of the Rum River forest (Kanabec County). The esker/tunnel valley complex is located both north and south of Co. Road 56 along the Kanabec State Forest Road – North and South Extensions (Sect. 6, 7, 8, 17, 18, and 19 of T39N R25W and Sect. 31 T40N R25W).

Access to the area is via the Kanabec SFR. Both forest road extensions intersect County Road 56. There are gates used to control access near each intersection of the SFRs and public roadways.

The esker, and its associated tunnel valley, are a unique and significant geologic feature. One of only 13 recorded in the Natural Heritage Information System in Minnesota, it is considered to be one of the longest and best-formed esker/tunnel valley systems in Central Minnesota by DNR geologists. The system was formed approximately 16,000 years ago when water in tunnels beneath glacial ice cut long, straight courses into the drift and bedrock beneath. When the ice thinned, the tunnels collapsed depositing eskers and low tunnel valleys that have since formed wetlands. It is about 12 miles long and runs northeast to southwest, bisecting the southern portion of the forest.

Well-drained and coarse sandy soils predominate, with finer textured soils in the surrounding uplands. Vegetation is primarily hardwood and mixed-conifer forest types on the upland portions, with lowland cover types nearer the three branches of the Groundhouse River that traverse the site. This forest type is uncommon in Mille Lacs & Kanabec Counties, and is mostly limited to well-drained soils located on glacial moraines, till plains and eskers. The quality of the forest community in the area ranks highly according to the MCBS, especially along the very steep south-facing slope of the Groundhouse River. Several glacial wetlands are also located in the rolling terrain that emanates from the esker (See map by Hannah Texler, MN DNR Div. of Ecological Services, 2006).

Esker and Tunnel Valley Geologic Formations



Minnesota County Biological Survey sites in this area of Kanabec and Mille Lacs Counties have been ranked 'high' in terms of their overall biodiversity significance. Contributing to this ranking are the unique geologic formations, the wetland and upland native plant communities, three species of Special Concern (i.e., butternut, halberd-leaved tear-thumb and wood sedge), and one state-listed threatened animal species (Blandings turtle). DNR ecologists believe that the Esker Site contains some of the best quality, most intact natural areas left in the Rum River State Forest.

Current Use – Esker Area. The esker site is largely surrounded by private residential and agricultural lands. It is part of a long, narrow and intermittent esker formation that extends into Mille Lacs County. In addition to the grant-in-aid snowmobile trails that criss-cross the area, and target shooting in the gravel pit, there is a constructed water impoundment adjacent to the esker/tunnel Valley complex which is popular with hunters. An extensive network of undesigantated ATV and hiking trails has also developed over time in this area.

In addition to the SFR, there is an existing GIA snowmobile trail running north-south through the area, running adjacent to the SFR in some places. The terrain south of County Road 56 (in Kanabec Co. along the South Extension) is hillier than the northern portion of the area. The esker runs east-west across this portion of the area, creating the area of greatest relief (60-70 feet in elevation).

There is a gravel pit located on the esker, which is soon to be decommissioned and reclaimed. Vehicular use is well established. Trails atop of the esker, and along the western access, appear to have so far had little impact on forest communities, aside from those routes located on steep side-slope that are visibly eroded. Heavy use of these or other unmaintained trails could lead to accelerated soil erosion and disturbance of the forest ground-layer. Over time, vehicular use could potentially damage portions of this unique geologic formation, along with their associated native plant communities and rare species habitat. Sedimentation of adjacent wetlands or branches of the Groundhouse River is also a key concern of OHV Field Team Members.

Surface Water and Wetlands

The Rum River State Forest is in the Rum River watershed. The Northern portion of the forest is drained by the Rum River. The Southern Unit drains primarily to the Groundhouse River, and to a lesser extent to the Rum River. The Groundhouse and Rum Rivers eventually drain into the Mississippi drainage. Major rivers running through this ecological subsection include the St. Croix, Kettle, Snake and Rum Rivers. The drainage network is (geologically) young and undeveloped, with extensive areas of wetlands present.

Much of the area in the Rum River State Forest is covered by water or wetlands. The most prevalent wetland types are wet meadows (Type 2 – 2,980 acres), wooded swamps (Type 7 – 1,472 acres), shrub swamps (Type 6, 1,324 acres), and bogs (Type 8, 994 acres).

Recreational Assessment

Division of Forestry recreational facilities within the Rum River Forest are limited to a few parking pads located adjacent to State Forest Roads. These pads are used for dispersed camping during fall hunting seasons. Hunting is the most popular recreational use of public lands within the forest. Lake Mille Lacs, Ann, Ogechi, Shakopee and Onamia are the major lakes in the area. All of these lakes have Public Water Access facilities with boat ramps.

The 23-mile Mille Lacs Snowmobile Trail is the primary designated recreational trail in the Rum River State Forest. This grant-in-aid trail, managed by local clubs, Isanti and Mille Lacs Counties, crosses the forest from east to west and connects to a snowmobile trail along Highway 169. A signed hunter-walking trail is located in the Mille Lacs (Southern Unit) portion of the forest. The Soo Line South ATV Trail also crosses state land within the forest.

Forest Access Route Inventory

2000 Inventory. An inventory conducted as part of the 2000 OHV system planning process identified about 54 miles of trail and 16.1 miles of State Forest Road within the forest. Most of these routes were originally developed to access timber sales and in connection with grant-in-aid snowmobile trail development. Other road and trail segments are largely dead end spurs, or are discontinuous because winter roads were frozen across wetlands to access timber sales. Still other trails, intended to provide one-time management access, have become overgrown and no longer exist.

2003 Inventory. The 2000 forest access route (road & trail) inventory was updated in 2003. The new access route inventory was intended to accurately depict all routes showing evidence of ongoing human use, with a particular focus on motorized access routes. The 2003 inventory showed 79.2 miles of existing routes (roads and trails) within the Rum River State Forest, including 18.1 miles of State Forest Roads. No trails were inventoried on County Lands within the forest. [See Appendix D, Southern Unit Map].

Data Sources . Existing road and trail maps were overlaid with various other data layers (e.g., wetlands, forest inventory data, rare natural features data, county data, etc.) to document and display previously inventoried routes. Field crews then located and collected new data on all unmapped forest access routes showing evidence of ongoing human use. Global positioning system (GPS) equipment was used to record the location and attributes of each route. Aerial photo interpretation was used to supplement field data collection. Information collected included route width and the level of apparent use, and significant conditions such as water or wetland crossings.

The 2003 access route inventory data was evaluated by the OHV Field Team using an Arc View GIS tool developed specifically for this purpose. The location of all inventoried forest access routes (i.e., roads and trails) is shown in Appendix D. The inventory documented 79.2 miles of access routes on public lands within the forest.

Designated State Forest Roads

The Rum River Forest has 18.1 miles of State Forest Roads (SFRs). The forest road system consists of the main Rum River SFR, which is a 5-mile Class 3 road constructed in the late 1980's that connects CSAH 20 with Co. Road 116. There are three Class 4 spurs off of the main SFR. The 0.8 mile Esker Trail SFR provides access from County Road 116 to a small, inactive gravel pit. All of these SFRs are gated to control access. The gates are normally closed in March and April during spring thaw and open the remainder of the year.

The Kanabec-North and Kanabec-South Extension are the only SFRs in the Kanabec County portion of the forest. Both SFR Extensions intersect with Co. Road 56. The North Extension is about a 2-mile long dead end road. The South Extension is about 1.5 miles long and connects with 220th Street. There are gates, one each the SFR segments, that are open except during spring thaw. All types of OHVs and HLVs are allowed on the Kanabec SFR.

Designated Recreational Trails

Snowmobile Trails - There are 22.7 miles of designated snowmobile trail within the boundaries of the Rum River State Forest. Portions of the Mille Lacs Snowmobile Trail pass through the forest and provide connections to a much larger and interconnected grant-in-aid trail system serving areas surrounding Mille Lacs Lake.

OHV Trails - There are about 2,720 acres of DNR administered land in the Kanabec County portion of the Rum River State Forest. OHV use has historically been permitted in this portion of the forest. The trail inventory identified a total of 20 miles of trail in this portion of the forest. About 6 miles are GIA snowmobile trails and the remainder are undesignated routes. The Esker Area, south of County Road 56, has been used in the past for ATV and OHM riding, along with several user developed trail loops in that area. In 2000, the OHV Planning Team recommended that ATV and OHM access trails be developed in this Kanabec County portion of the Rum River forest.

There are currently no state designated ATV, OHM, or ORV trails in the Rum River State Forest. The Soo Line South grant-in-aid ATV Trail does cross state land within the forest. Under the 'limited' forest classification, OHVs may use any forest road not posted closed. Some of the roads and trails are currently used by off-highway vehicles.

Non-motorized Trail - There is one very short and nearly overgrown non-motorized recreation trail in the Mille Lacs County portion of the Rum River State Forest. There is also a series of designated hunter-walking trails in the Daily Unit of the Mille Lacs County scattered (DNR-administered) lands.

Non-designated Routes - The Forest Access Route inventory documents 61.6 miles of non-designated routes. These are unsigned routes that are not specifically designated as either State Forest Roads, or as any type of recreational trail. Under the final plan, these routes will be closed to vehicular use, except for seasonal ATV and HLV use for certain seasonal hunting/trapping purposes. No use of undesignated routes within the esker/tunnel valley area (approx. 570 acres) will be permitted at any time of the year.

Motor Vehicle Use Classification

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

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

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

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

Current Classification. The DNR manages a total of 78,702 acres of land in Mille Lacs County (Table 4). OHV policies for DNR administered lands vary based upon the type of management unit (e.g., State Forests, State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, etc.) OHV use is prohibited by statute on the majority, or about 71% of the DNR-administered lands in Mille Lacs County. OHV use on the remaining 29% is permitted pursuant to state law and posted restrictions. All state forest lands in Mille Lacs County are currently classified as ‘limited’.

Table 4. Classification of DNR-Administered Lands in Mille Lacs County with Respect to OHV Use [Source: MN DNR, 2005]

OHV Use Allowed – ‘Limited Classification’

Unit Name	Acreage
Rum River State Forest	17,089
Scattered State Forest Lands in Mille Lacs County	5,984
Total	23,073

OHV Use Prohibited [by statute]

Unit Name	Acreage
Mille Lacs Kathio State Park	9,656
Father Hennepin State Park	274
Mille Lacs Wildlife Management Area (WMA)	36,769
Other Fisheries and Wildlife Management Areas	8,718
Water Accesses and Miscellaneous Lands	212
Total	55,629

Historical Perspective. In 2000, all state forest lands in the Kanabec and Mille Lacs planning area were classified as ‘limited.’ The OHV use history in the two counties differs markedly. State Forest lands in Kanabec County, including all of the Snake River and a portion of the Rum River State Forest, were previously managed according to the *Moose Lake Area Forest Resource Management Plan (MN DNR, 1985)*. That plan did not restrict OHV use.

State Forests in Mille Lacs County, on the other hand, were ‘closed’ to motor vehicles (except highway licensed vehicles and snowmobiles) by the *Cambridge Area Forest Resource Management Plan (MN DNR, 1988)*. At that time, the only options for OHV management were ‘open’ or ‘closed’. And, there were few enforceable rules to keep vehicles on designated routes. The ‘limited’ classification was adopted in 2000 because the Rum River State Forest had such a varied management history, and to allow for further analysis of OHV opportunities during subsequent planning efforts.

Final Classification. *MN Laws 2003, Chapter 128, Article 1, Section 167 (as amended)* requires the DNR to review the classification of State Forest lands and to change the classification of State Forest lands south of US Highway 2 to either ‘limited’ or ‘closed.’ The Rum River State Forest is currently classified as ‘limited’. The planning team analyzed the eight criteria set forth in *MN Rules Chap. 6100.1950, Subp. 1-4*. and recommended retaining the current *limited* classification for all state forest lands within the Rum River State Forest. The Commissioner has concurred with this recommendation and so classified the forest in his final orders.

Esker / Tunnel Valley Area Protection. The DNR Commissioner has invoked authority granted him pursuant to *MN Stat. Chap. 84.926, Subd. 5*, in order to preclude vehicular use within the unique and sensitive Esker/Tunnel Valley Area Complex (Appendix D). By so doing, state forest lands, which encompass a large portion of the Esker/Tunnel Valley Area Complex, are not subject to the exceptions provided for in *MN Stat. Chap. 84.926 Subd. 2 & 4*, which would otherwise allow for ATV and HLV use of undesignated routes (ATVs may also travel off-trail) for certain hunting and trapping purposes by licensed persons during open seasons.

Invoking this provision means that all trail access and entry points, and the Esker/Tunnel Valley Area boundaries themselves, will be mapped and posted ‘closed’ to vehicular use. Designated State Forest Roads within the Esker/Tunnel Valley Area will remain open to OHV and HLV use, subject to the general prohibition on off-trail OHV travel, and pursuant to any temporary road closures or seasonal road-use restrictions. However, no OHV or HLV use of unsigned or undesignated routes in the Esker/Tunnel Valley Area will be permitted at any time.

This prohibition applies only to the specified area, and only to the use of ATVs and HLVs during legal hunting and trapping seasons. It does not modify the ‘limited’ forest classification proposed for the larger Rum River State Forest. Vehicular use of SFRs in the area, and grant-in-aid snowmobile trail use (by snowmobiles), is unaffected. However, future road and trail development proposals through this sensitive area will be evaluated very carefully through the department’s interdisciplinary project review process, recognizing that vehicular use is fundamentally inconsistent with the management objectives for this area.

Forest Road and Forest Trail Designations

The planning team evaluated each of the inventoried forest access routes. For designated roads and trails, the presumption was that the current designation and uses would be maintained unless there was a compelling reason to propose changes. Under the ‘limited’ classification, all forest access routes not designated as forest roads or recreational trails will be closed to vehicular use, except pursuant to the exceptions outlined in MS Chap. 84.926.

State Forest Roads

Various state statutes and rules govern the development and use of State Forest Roads. Key passages include:

1. “State forest road” means a road constructed, acquired, maintained, or administered by the commissioner for the purpose of carrying out forest resource management ...” (*MN Statutes 89.001, Subd. 14*)

2. "The commissioner shall provide a system of forest roads and trails which provides access to state forest land ..." (*MN Statutes 89.002, Subd. 3*)
3. "... the commissioner is not a road authority under chapters 160 to 168, and chapters 160 to 168 do not apply to forest roads ..." (*MN Statutes 89.71, Subd.7*)
4. "The commissioner may designate a state forest road as a minimum-maintenance forest road to be maintained at a level consistent with the intended use.." (*MN Statutes 89.71, Subd. 5*)

The DNR divides State Forest Roads into two classes – System Roads and Minimum Maintenance Roads – based on their condition, intended use and planned maintenance level. **System Roads** are the major roads in the forest that provide forest management access, recreational access, and links to state, county, or township public roads. System roads are used on a daily or weekly basis, and are graveled and maintained to allow travel by highway-licensed vehicles. System roads are typically open to all motor vehicles, including OHVs, but may be closed seasonally or temporarily to address specific road or fire conditions. State Forest Roads are, by definition, not regular public roads. They are principally intended to serve state forest management and protection needs, and they do not provide legal access to private property.

Minimum Maintenance Roads are forest management access roads used on an intermittent basis. Recreational users may use them, but they are not promoted or maintained for recreational use. While open to recreational use, minimum maintenance roads may, in some cases, not be usable by low-clearance vehicles. The roads will be graded and graveled as needed for forest management purposes. Roads are signed with a "Minimum Maintenance Road" sign, and may be gated and closed during certain times of the year.

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

Recreational Trails

Non-motorized. There are no current or pending proposals to designate additional non-motorized recreational trails in the Rum River State Forest. Non-motorized users (e.g., hikers, horseback riders, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, mountain bikers) may use all roads, trails, and most undesignated routes in the forest.

Snowmobile. There are no proposed changes to the existing designated 22.7 miles of designated snowmobile trails in the Rum River State Forest.

OHV Trails. There are no new OHV Trails proposed for the Rum River State Forest.

Undesignated Routes. The plan leaves 61.6 miles of non-designated routes. These routes will not be maintained for any recreational use, but may be used on occasion for natural resource management access. Over time these routes may become blocked by deadfalls or revegetate naturally, thereby obliterating the corridor.

Implementation Schedule

Plan Adoption & Implementation.

Final forest classification and route designation decisions will be formally implemented via a series of Commissioner's Orders registered with the Minnesota Secretary of State and published in the *Minnesota State Register*. All final plans, maps, decision documents and orders will also be posted at www.dnr.state.mn.us. A statewide DNR news release will also be issued announcing the final decisions and the availability of the final documents at the Secretary of State's Office and on the DNR website.

Road Signing Projects

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

Effective Date

The anticipated effective date for the classification of the Rum River State Forest, and for the designation of roads, trails and the Esker/Tunnel Valley Non-motorized Area posting, is September 1, 2007. This date is listed on the final signed Commissioner's Orders which are published in the State Register and filed with the Secretary of State.

APPENDIX A

Classification of Forest Lands North of US Highway 2

[MN Laws 2005, 1st Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 2]

Sec. 152. Laws 2003, chapter 128, article 1, section 167, subdivision 1, is amended to read: *

Sec. 167. [FOREST LAND OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE USE RECLASSIFICATION.]

Subdivision 1. [FOREST CLASSIFICATION STATUS REVIEW.]

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

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

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

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

[*Ed. Note: Underlining denotes new language added following the 2005 legislative session]

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APPENDIX B

Minnesota Rules, Chapter 6100.1950 Forest Land Classification

6100.1950 MOTOR VEHICLES AND SNOWMOBILES; FOREST LANDS.

Subpart 1. **Classified forest lands.** The operation of motor vehicles and snowmobiles on forest lands classified by the commissioner for purposes of motor vehicle use according to subpart 2 and Minnesota Statutes, section [89.002](#), is regulated according to items A to C.

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

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

C. No person shall operate a motor vehicle or snowmobile on forest lands classified as closed, unless on frozen public waters where operation is not otherwise prohibited. Motor vehicles that are licensed for use on public highways may be operated on forest roads that are not posted or gated closed. Snowmobiles may operate on designated trails.

Subp. 2. **Criteria for classification.** The following criteria shall be considered when classifying forest lands for motor vehicle use:

- A. resource sensitivity and management objectives;
- B. resource impact by motorized and nonmotorized use, including erosion, rutting, and impacts on vegetation, wildlife, air, water, or natural habitats;
- C. motorized and nonmotorized recreational opportunity in area;
- D. user needs, such as trails, parking, signs, and access;
- E. the degree and trend of motor vehicle use in the area;
- F. the degree and trend of nonmotor vehicle use in the area;
- G. competing interests among different user groups; and
- H. public safety and law enforcement concerns.

Subp. 3. **Notice and public meeting.** Before changing the classification of forest lands for motor vehicle use, the commissioner shall provide notice and a public meeting according to items A to C.

A. A public meeting shall be held in the county where the largest portion of the forest lands are located to provide information to and receive comment from the public regarding the proposed classification change.

B. Sixty days before the public meeting, notice of the proposed classification change shall be published in legal newspapers that serve the counties in which the lands are located and in a statewide Department of Natural Resources news release and in the State Register. The notice shall include a summary of the proposed action, a request for public comment, and notice of the public meeting.

C. Twenty-one days before the public meeting, notice of the meeting shall be announced in a statewide Department of Natural Resources news release.

Subp. 4. **Commissioner's decision.** The commissioner shall make a decision about the proposed classification change after considering the criteria listed in subpart 2 and any public comment received and explaining how the nature and magnitude of the criteria and comments relate to the classification.

STAT AUTH: MS s [14.045](#); [14.388](#); [84.03](#); [85.052](#); [85.053](#); [85.20](#); [86A.05](#); [86A.06](#); [89.031](#); [89.19](#) to [89.21](#); [89.71](#)

HIST: 24 SR 208; 25 SR 782; 27 SR 27. Copyright 2005 by the Office of Revisor of Statutes, State of Minnesota.

APPENDIX C

Minnesota Statutes 2005, Chapter 84.926 Hunting / Trapping Exceptions

84.926 Vehicle use on public lands; exceptions.

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

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

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

Subd. 3. **All-terrain vehicles; closed forests; hunting.** Notwithstanding section [84.777](#), the commissioner may determine whether all-terrain vehicles are allowed on specific forest roads, on state forest lands classified as closed, for the purpose of hunting big game during an open big game season. The determination shall be by written order as published in the State Register and is exempt from chapter 14. Section [14.386](#) does not apply.

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

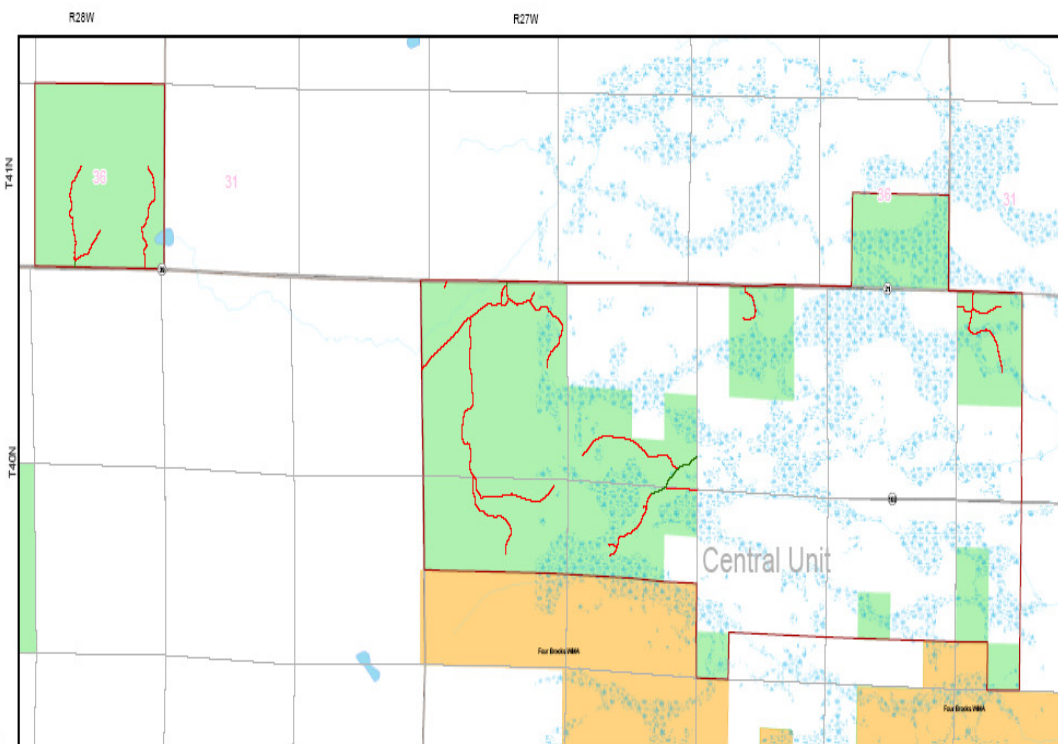
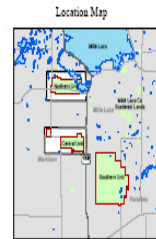
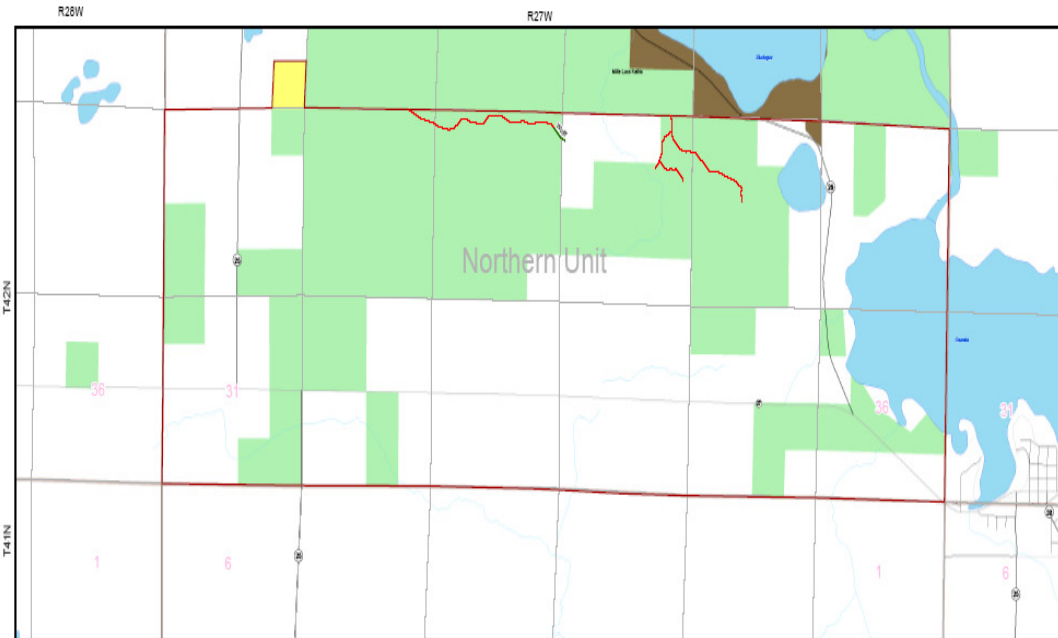
- (1) hunting big game or transporting or installing hunting stands during October, November, and December, when in possession of a valid big game hunting license;
- (2) retrieving big game in September, when in possession of a valid big game hunting license;
- (3) tending traps during an open trapping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

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

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

Rum River State Forest Forest Road and Trail Designation Plan



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Map Explanations:

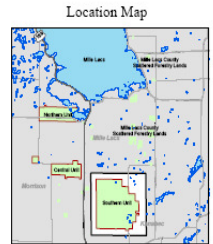
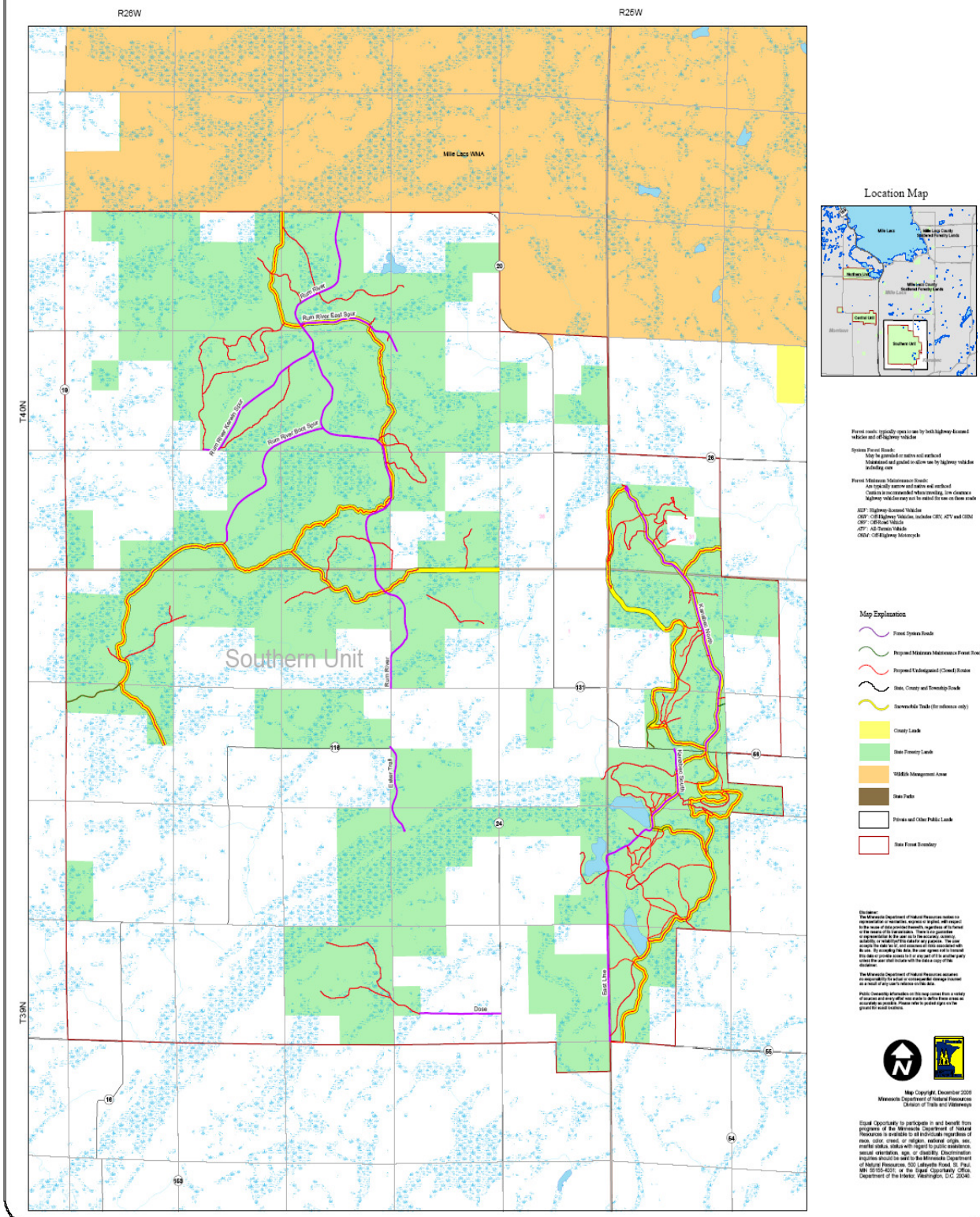
- Forest System Road
- Proposed Management System Road
- Proposed Management System Road
- State, County and Township Roads
- Nonroad Vehicle (Off-Highway Vehicle)
- Clear Land
- Non-Forest Land
- Wildlife Management Area
- State Parks
- Private and Other Public Lands
- State Forest Boundary

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Rum River State Forest Forest Road and Trail Designation Plan



Forest roads: typically open to use by both highway-bound vehicles and off-highway vehicles.

Spur Road: May be opened to motor and off-road vehicular use and/or used as a highway vehicle route including use.

Forest Management Road: Are typically narrow and often well surfaced. Considered non-motorable. Motor vehicles, low clearance highway vehicles may not be added for use on these roads.

DEP Highway-Bound Vehicle
 DWP Off-Highway Vehicle, includes OHV, ATV and UTV
 DWP Off-Road Vehicle
 OHV Off-Road Vehicle
 OHV Off-Highway Vehicle

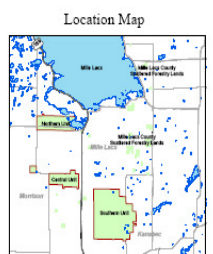
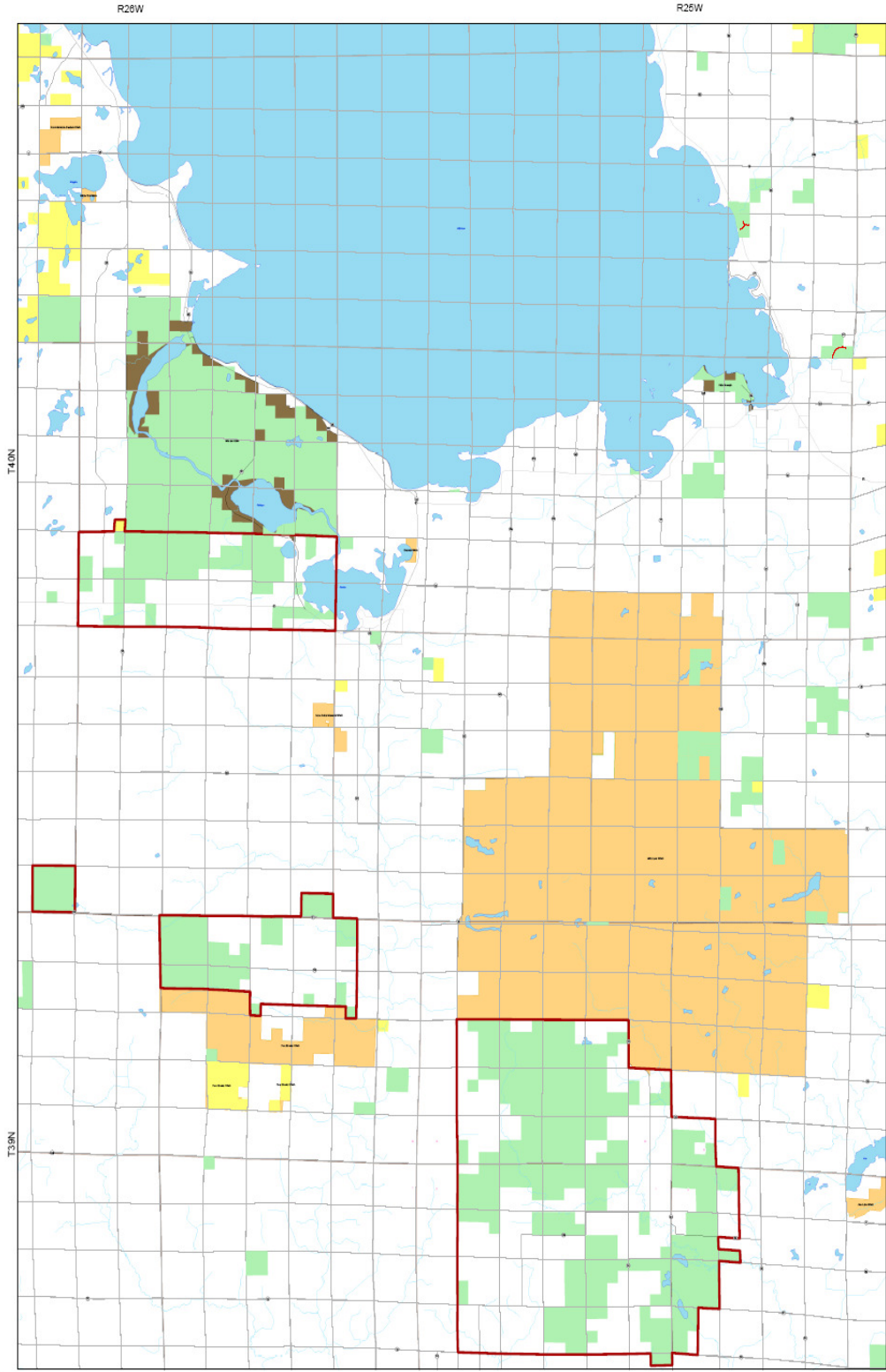
- ### Map Explanation
- Forest Spoke Roads
 - Proposed Minnesota Management Forest Road
 - Proposed Outage Road (Closed Road)
 - State, County and Township Road
 - Turnpike/State Road (for reference only)
 - County Land
 - State Forestry Land
 - USFS Management Area
 - State Park
 - Private and Other Public Land
 - State Forest Boundary

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Rum River State Forest Scattered Forestry Lands Forest Road and Trail Designation Plan



Forest roads include open space by both highway-owned vehicles and off-highway vehicles.

Forest System Roads:
 - Will be provided in matrix and without improvement and guided to drive use by highway vehicles including cars.

Forest Maintenance/Maintenance Roads:
 - Are typically narrow and narrow and without. Customers to non-motorized vehicles including law mowers. Highway vehicles may not be used for use on these roads.

DOT Highway-Owned Vehicle
 OHV - Off-Highway Vehicle, including OHV, ATV and UTV
 OHV - Off-Highway Vehicle
 OHV - Off-Highway Vehicle
 OHV - Off-Highway Vehicle

- Map Explanation**
- Forest System Roads
 - Proposed Maintenance/Maintenance Forest Road
 - Proposed Backroad (Closed) Road
 - State, County and Township Road
 - Summer/State Road (for reference only)
 - County Lands
 - State Forestry Lands
 - WMA Management Area
 - State Parks
 - Private and Other Public Lands
 - State Forest Boundary

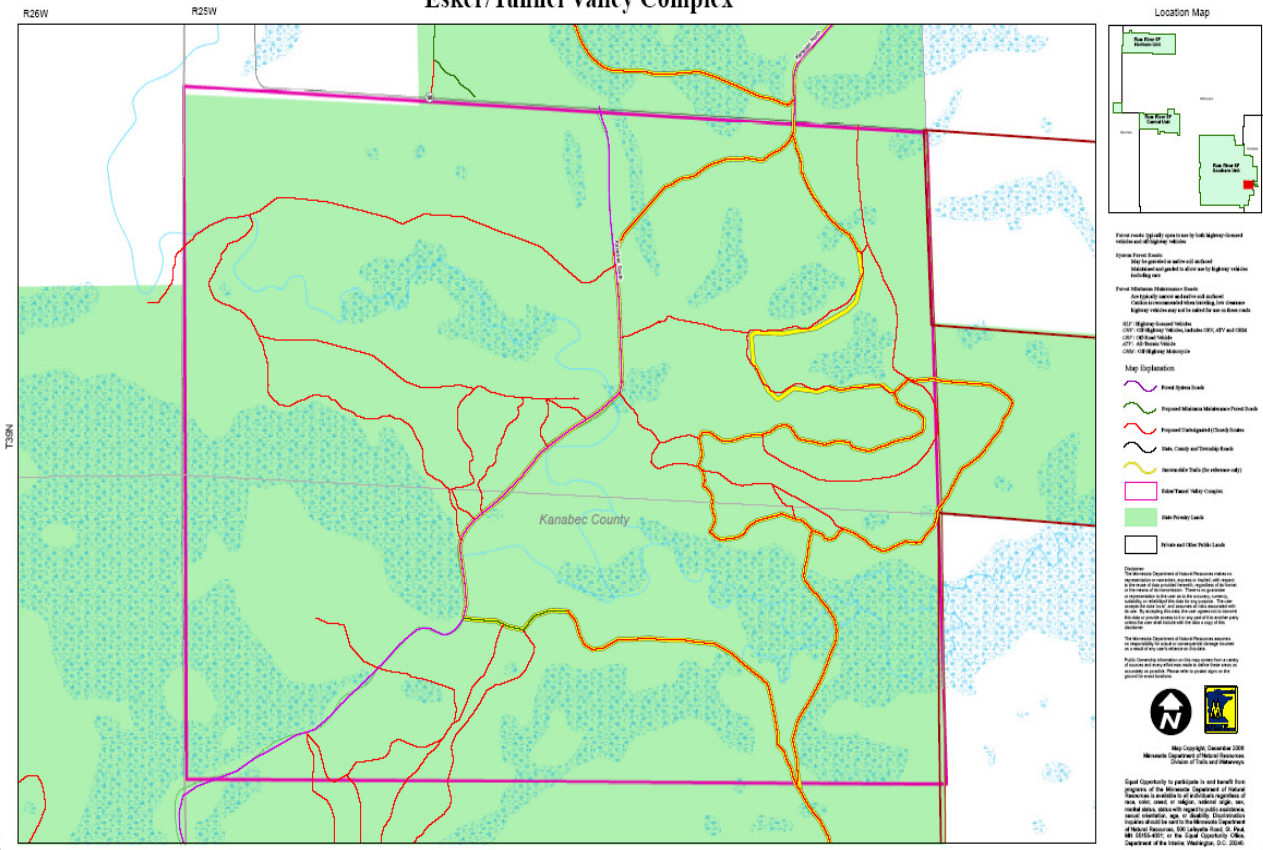
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Rum River State Forest Non Motorized Area Designation Esker/Tunnel Valley Complex



Rum River State Forest Biodiversity

