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Forest Classification
And
Forest Road and Trail Designations
For the
Southern Minnesota Forests Unit
(Birch Lakes, Sand Dunes, and R. J. Dorer)
7-2-08 Draft Plan
(Subject to change)



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

Minnesota Laws 2003, Chapter 128, Article 1, Section 167 as amended by *Minnesota Laws 2005, 1st Special Session*, Chapter 1, Article 2, Section 152 directs the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to review the recreational motor vehicle use classification of all State Forest lands and to designate forest roads and trails. Following public review and comment, the Commissioner must change the status of State Forest lands subject to the review to a classification of limited or closed according to the process set forth in MN Rules Chap. 6100.1950.

This plan also identifies those forest roads and trails that the DNR proposes to officially (un)designate for various motorized and non-motorized purposes within the planning area. Consistent with legislative policy direction, the future use of off-highway vehicles and motor vehicles (e.g., ATVs, OHMs, ORVs, HLVs), equestrian and bicycles in this area will henceforth be in accordance with the direction outlined in the final version of this plan, as adopted by the Commissioner. The motor vehicle use classification and road and trail designations are to be adopted and implemented through the publication of written orders in the State Register for each forest.

Between 2003 and 2008, the DNR will review the motor vehicle use classification and designate forest roads and trails on all State Forest lands in Minnesota. This plan covers a portion of State Forest lands in the Southern Forests planning unit in southeastern and central Minnesota.

LANDS COVERED BY THIS PLAN

This plan proposes forest road/trail designations and motor vehicle use classifications on State Forest land within the statutorily defined boundaries of the Birch Lakes, Sand Dunes State Forests and Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest and on scattered DNR administered forestlands outside of state forest boundaries within the Southern Minnesota Forests planning unit. Twenty counties are included in the expansive planning area including; Houston, Fillmore, Olmsted, Winona, Wabasha, Goodhue, Rice, Le Sueur, Dakota, Sherburne, Hennepin, Morrison, Stearns, Benton, Kandiyohi, Martin, Nicollet, Meeker, Sibley and Yellow Medicine. The three State Forests and scattered lands have a gross acreage of approximately 1,033,297 acres, of which about 59,021 acres (or about 5.71 %) are administered by the DNR Division of Forestry and were the focus of the review and management plan for the Southern Minnesota planning unit.

PROPOSED MOTOR VEHICLE USE CLASSIFICATIONS

The State Forests and/or associated scattered State Forest lands in the Southern Minnesota Forests planning unit are located south of US Highway 2 and must be reclassified as either *limited* or *closed* to comply with current Minnesota law; lands located north of US Highway 2 are to maintain a *managed* classification unless reclassified by the DNR Commissioner. The DNR Southern Minnesota Forests Road & Trail Designation Planning Group discussed alternative classification proposals and developed classification recommendations for State Forest lands in the planning area. All criteria listed in Minn. Rules part 6100.1950, subpart 2 must be considered under the prescribed classification review. The Commissioner of Natural Resources classified State Forest lands within the planning area as follows:

Birch Lakes State Forest	<i>Closed</i>
Sand Dunes State Forest	<i>Closed</i>
Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest	<i>Limited</i>
Scattered DNR-administered State Forest Lands	
Benton	<i>Limited</i>
Dakota	<i>Limited</i>
Fillmore	<i>Limited</i>
Goodhue	<i>Limited</i>
Hennepin	<i>Limited</i>
Houston	<i>Limited</i>
Kandiyohi	<i>Limited</i>
Le Sueur	<i>Limited</i>
Martin	<i>Limited</i>
Meeker	<i>Limited</i>
Morrison	<i>Limited</i>
Nicollet	<i>Limited</i>
Olmsted	<i>Limited</i>
Rice	<i>Limited</i>
Sherburne	<i>Limited</i>
Sibley	<i>Limited</i>
Stearns	<i>Limited</i>
Wabasha	<i>Limited</i>
Winona	<i>Limited</i>
Yellow Medicine	<i>Limited</i>

FOREST ROUTE INVENTORY

In 2003 and 2004, DNR staff made an effort to inventory the location and condition of all existing routes that show evidence of ongoing human use on state- and county-administered forest lands. The inventory identified approximately 384 miles of routes on DNR Forestry-administered lands in the Southern Minnesota Forests planning unit. Approximately 377 miles of inventoried routes are located inside the statutory boundary of the State Forests and just over 6.9 miles are located outside of State Forest boundaries.

PROPOSED ROUTE DESIGNATIONS

The planning team evaluated all inventoried forest access routes and recommended that they be designated as a road or trail, be closed to future use, or that they remain 'non-designated'. For existing designated roads and trails, the presumption was that the current designation and uses would be maintained, unless there was a compelling reason to propose changes.

State Forest Road Designations

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

System Forest Roads (SFRs) are the major roads in the forest that provide forest management access, recreational access, and links to state, county, or township public roads. System roads are used on a daily or weekly basis, and are graveled and maintained to allow travel by highway-licensed vehicles. System roads are typically open to all motor vehicles, including OHVs, but may be closed seasonally or temporarily to address specific road or fire conditions. State Forest Roads are, by definition, not regular public roads. They are principally intended to serve state forest management and protection needs, and they do not provide legal access to private property. The planning team recommended the designation of 20.17 miles of System Forest Roads within the Southern Minnesota State Forest planning unit and zero miles of SFR on scattered lands outside of the State Forests boundaries.

Minimum Maintenance Roads (MMRs) are forest management access roads used on an intermittent basis. Recreational users may use them, but they are not promoted or maintained for recreational use. MMRs will be graded and graveled as needed for forest management purposes, but may not always be usable by low-clearance vehicles. MMRs are signed and may be gated and/or closed during certain times of the year. The planning team proposes designation of 1.82 miles of MMRs inside the Southern Minnesota State forest planning unit and 0.47 miles on scattered state lands outside the forests.

Recreational Trail Designations

Non-motorized. The planning team has proposed the designation of 181 miles of trails for non-motorized use within the Southern Minnesota State Forest planning unit. Within that 181 miles the team designated 145 miles to be available for equestrian trails and 123 miles available as mountain biking trails. Most of these routes have a history of such uses. Non-

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motorized trail users (e.g., hikers, cross-country skiers, snowshoers) may also use forest roads, trails, and most non-designated routes in the forest.

OHV Trails. There are 21.53 miles of OHV trail designations proposed for the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest.

Snowmobile. This plan does not propose changes to the existing grant-in-aid snowmobile trail system.

Proactive Route Closures. The planning team has recommended a total of 7.26 miles of unsustainable routes be closed to all vehicular, equestrian and mountain bicycle use.

Non-designated Routes. The proposal is to leave a total of 110.47 miles of routes as 'non-designated'. These routes will not be maintained for any recreational use, but may be used infrequently for natural resource management.

Table 1 summarizes the proposed designations of the inventoried forest routes on DNR-managed lands within the forest boundaries and on scattered forest lands.

Table 1. Southern Minnesota Forests Unit Forest Road & Trail Designation Summary
 Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, 2008. DNR DRS. Generated Using ArcView Extension

Southern Minnesota Forest Classification Review & Road/Trail Designations
DRAFT Summary Statistics for State Forests in Planning Unit
 (Public Comment Period - July 7, 2008 - September 12, 2008)

																								Richard J. Dorer State Forest				Sand Dunes State Forest		Birch Lakes State Forest		Scatter-ed Lands	
Proposed Classifications																								Limited				Closed		Closed		Limited	
Recreation Units of R. J. Dorer State Forest		Snake Creek		Trout Valley		Zumbro Bottoms		Hay Creek		Kruger		Bronk Tract		Brightsdale		Isinours		Wet Bark (Oak Ridge)		Vinegar Ridge (Money Creek)		Reno											
Total Acreages		3,480		2,375		5,068		1,500		1,332		761		900		188		1,640		2,042		3,681		1016205.00		11040.45		630.42		4425.00			
DNR Forestry		3,480		2,375		5,068		1,500		1,332		761		900		100		1,640		2,042		3,681		*48255.00		5813.60		527.40		4425.00			
Private-Industry																								3012.00		0.00		0.00					
Private -Other																								964678.00		5222.85		103.02					
County																								260.00		4.00		0.00					
Proposed Trail Designations		Snake Creek		Trout Valley		Zumbro Bottoms		Hay Creek		Kruger		Bronk Tract		Brightsdale		Isinours		Wet Bark (Oak Ridge)		Vinegar Ridge (Money Cr)		Reno											
		Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Total Existing	Proposed Rec. Units	Proposed Scattered	RJD Totals	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Proposed	
Forest Roads Total			0.94		0.18		5.58		0.36		0.97		0.13		1.23		0.14		0.17		0.37		0.41		10.48	5.43	15.91	7.94	8.30	1.13	1.69	0.47	
System Forest Rds.			0.94		0.18		5.58		0.36		0.97		0.13		0.93		0.14		0.17		0.37		0.41		10.18	3.91	14.09	0.00	8.30	0.00	1.69		
Min. Maint. Rds.			0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.30		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.30	1.52	1.82	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.47	
Trails Total		18.50	20.36	7.00	7.40	40.00	43.79	13.76	14.50	7.75	7.47	6.50	10.97	5.70	11.97	3.20	3.92	8.70	11.44	6.20	6.50	14.80	17.37	132.11	155.69	25.33	181.02	18.00	20.60	4.90	4.90	3.51	
ATV/OHM Total		13.50	14.13	7.00	7.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.50	21.53	0.00	21.53	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Non-MotorTotal		18.50	20.36	7.00	7.40	40.00	43.79	13.76	14.50	7.75	7.47	6.50	10.97	5.70	11.97	3.20	3.92	8.70	11.44	6.20	6.50	14.80	17.37	132.11	155.69	25.33	181.02	18.00	20.60	4.90	4.90	3.51	
Horse		18.50	16.07	7.00	7.40	40.00	43.79	13.76	14.50	5.00	5.34	6.50	10.97	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.70	11.44	0.00	6.50	14.80	17.37	114.26	133.38	12.42	145.80	18.00	17.30	0.00	0.00	3.51	
Mountain Bike		18.50	20.36	7.00	7.40	0.00	0.00	13.76	14.50	5.00	7.47	6.50	10.97	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.92	8.70	11.44	0.00	6.50	0.00	17.37	59.46	99.93	23.56	123.49	0.00	20.60	4.90	4.90	3.51	
Hike & Ski		18.50	20.36	7.00	7.40	40.00	43.79	13.76	14.50	5.00	7.47	6.50	10.97	5.70	11.97	3.20	3.92	8.70	11.44	6.20	6.50	14.80	17.37	129.36	155.69	25.33	181.02	18.00	20.60	4.90	4.90	3.51	
Horse - no Bike		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	43.79	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	43.79	0.00	43.79	18.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Mtn Bike-no Horse		0.00	4.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.92	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.34	11.26	21.60	0.00	3.30	4.90	4.90	0.00	

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Accessible	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.75	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.75	0.75	0.00	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Non-Designated Routes		2.37		2.49		3.34		1.52		1.22		0.97		0.00		0.00		1.07		0.00		0.79		13.77	96.70	110.47		26.09	0.00	0.00	2.94
Proactive Closures		0.00		0.00		7.26		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		7.26	0.00	7.26		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Routes Inventoried		23.67		10.07		59.97		16.38		9.66		12.07		13.20		4.06		12.68		6.87		18.57		187.20	127.46	314.66		54.99		6.59	6.92

*Under R.J.D. the total of **48,255 ac** for **DNR Forestry** acreage = **22,879 ac** (RJD Recreation Unit acreage) + **25,376 ac** (RJD Scattered Lands acreage)
 Under Scattered Lands "**Existing**" trail miles were unknown previous to study completed for this plan.
 Mileage used for "**Existing**" trail miles was taken from DNR published trail maps.

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IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The classifications of State Forest lands for motor vehicle use and the proposed road and trail designations are subject to public review and comment. The DNR will evaluate public input received at the public open house and in written comments in reaching final determinations. The Commissioner of Natural Resources will then issue Commissioner's Orders to change the motor vehicle use classification and designate forest roads and trails. The anticipated effective date for the Commissioner's Orders is December 31, 2009.

SOUTHERN MINNESOTA FORESTS UNIT DRAFT PLAN

BACKGROUND

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages over 4 million acres of State Forest land for the people of Minnesota. Minnesota's State Forests are managed to produce timber, protect watersheds, provide outdoor recreation, and perpetuate rare and distinctive species of native flora and fauna. State Forests are managed in a "sustainable" manner, in order to ensure that they remain healthy, vital, and productive for present and future generations. State Forests provide a variety of dispersed, unstructured outdoor recreation opportunities, such as hunting, trapping, berry picking, and nature observation. For more structured activities, many State Forests contain recreation facilities with campgrounds, day-use areas, and trails designated for various motorized and non-motorized purposes. Minnesota Statutes direct the Commissioner of Natural Resources to:

- Manage State Forests according to the principles of multiple use and sustained yield under M.S. Section 89.002, subd. 1; and
- Provide a system of forest roads and trails to access State Forest lands under M.S. Section 89.002, subd. 3.

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

Minnesota Laws 2003, Chapter 128, Article 1, Section 167 as amended by *Minnesota Laws 2005, 1st Special Session*, Chapter 1, Article 2, Section 152 directs the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources to review the recreational motor vehicle use classification of all State Forest lands and to designate forest roads and trails. Following public review and comment, the Commissioner must change the status of State Forest lands subject to the review located south of US Highway 2 to a classification of *limited* or *closed*, or maintain a *managed* classification for State Forest lands north of US Highway 2 unless reclassified by the Commissioner. The motor vehicle use classification and road and trail designations are to be adopted and implemented through the publication of written orders in the *State Register* for each forest.

This draft plan documents the outcome of that evaluation, and identifies the proposed state forest classification and those forest roads and trails that DNR proposes to officially designate, or non-designate, for various access purposes, both motorized and non-motorized, within the Southern Minnesota Forests Planning Unit. If the recommendations are implemented, 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 Southern Minnesota Forest Unit will be limited to only those roads and trails that are specifically signed and/or designated for their use. The plan also identifies those routes DNR proposes to designate as non-motorized trails within the prescribed planning unit. Within the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest trails to be used for equestrian and mountain bike use must also be signed and/or designated for their use.

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6100.1355 NONMOTORIZED USE.

Subpart 2.Horses.

Within a state park and in the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest, no person shall ride, lead, or have a horse except on trails and areas designated for use by horses. Horses are prohibited from using forest campgrounds unless the area has been specifically designated for use by horses or a special use permit from a forest officer has been obtained. Horses are permitted on all other forest lands except where it is posted to prohibit the use of horses.

Subp. 3.Bicycles.

Within a state park and in the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest, people riding bicycles may travel only on designated bike trails or where motor vehicles are allowed, except in areas posted to prohibit bicycle use. Bicycles are permitted on all other forest lands except where it is posted to prohibit bicycle use.

Statutory Authority:

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

History: [24 SR 208](#) Posted: October 11, 2007

PROCESS

In March 2008, an interdisciplinary planning group with members from the DNR Divisions of Ecological Services, Enforcement, Fish & Wildlife, Forestry, Trails & Waterways and Regional Operations began working on the following tasks:

1. Collaborate with the public and other forest management agencies to develop a plan for the management of public motor vehicle use on forest lands in the planning area.
2. Consider the criteria for classification of State Forest lands (M.R. part 61 00.1950) and recommend an appropriate motor vehicle use classification.
3. Evaluate all inventoried forest access routes and propose non-designated of forest roads and trails for specific motorized and non-motorized uses.
4. Present the planning group's recommendations for public review, discussion and comment.

The major steps in developing the road and trail designation proposals are:

1. Compile an inventory of forest access routes, which are defined as forest roads and trails, and other routes, showing evidence of ongoing human use. Prepare maps showing all travel routes.
2. Host a series of public open houses to alert people to the classification review and road and trail designation process, to gain an understanding of how they use these access routes, how they use state lands generally, and to solicit ideas regarding the use of the forest lands and future designation of selected routes.
3. Conduct interagency working sessions to make preliminary designation and use recommendations based on inventory data, staff knowledge, and public input from the open houses.
4. Identify routes potentially suitable for designation as motor/non-motor recreational trails.
5. Prepare designation plans and maps for internal agency and public review and comment.

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DESCRIPTION OF LANDS COVERED BY THIS PLAN

Between 2003 and 2008, the DNR will review the motor vehicle use classification and designate forest roads and trails on all State Forest lands in Minnesota. These forest classifications and road/trail designations plan covers all of the DNR Forestry-administered lands within the statutory boundaries of the Sand Dunes State Forest, Birch Lakes State forest and the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest and scattered lands within

PLANNING UNIT DEFINED FOR THIS PLAN

The Southern Minnesota Forests Planning Unit includes the Sand Dunes State Forest, Birch Lake State Forest, Richard J. Dorer State Forest and scattered State Forest lands administered by the DNR Division of Forestry in twenty (20) counties. This plan addresses proposed forest classifications and road/trail designations for the three (3) named State Forests and those scattered State Forest lands.

LOCATIONS, ACREAGES, AND OWNERSHIP

The DNR's Southern Minnesota Forests planning unit is located in the following counties: *Sherburne, Morrison, Benton, Kandiyohi, Martin, Nicollet, Meeker, Sibley, Yellow Medicine, Hennepin, Stearns, Houston, Fillmore, Olmsted, Winona, Wabasha, Goodhue, Dakota, Rice and Le Sueur Counties*. The total planning unit covers just over 8,772,825 acres.

There are three named State Forests with statutorily-defined boundaries within the Southern Minnesota Forests planning unit. These three State Forests have a gross acreage of about 1,027,876 acres, of which just over 59,022 acres are administered by the DNR Division of Forestry.

STATE ADMINISTERED LANDS

The State Forest lands located within the Southern Minnesota Forests Unit taken together encompass a gross acreage of about 1,032,302 acres. The Sand Dunes State Forest includes 11,040 acres within the statutory boundary, of which DNR's Division of Forestry administers 5,813 acres, or about 52.6%. Birch Lakes State Forest includes 630 acres within the statutory boundary, of which DNR's Division of Forestry administers 527 acres, or 83.7%. Richard J. Dorer State Forest includes 1,016,205 acres within the statutory boundary, of which DNR's Division of Forestry administers 48,255 acres, or 4.7%. about Another 4,426 acres of forest land administered by the DNR Division of Forestry lies outside of State Forest boundaries in the Southern Minnesota Forests planning unit. Therefore, a total of 59,022 net acres were the focus of this planning exercise.

See Table 2, Summary of Forest Land Ownership in Southern Minnesota Forests Unit.

Table 2. Summary of Forest Land Ownership in Southern Minnesota Forests Unit

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, 2008. DNR DRS. Generated Using ArcMap Extension

Within-Forest Acreages & Inventory				
State Forest	Statutory	Land Administrator		Inventory Routes (Miles)
	Acres	DNR	County	
Richard J. Dorer	1,016,205	48,255	260	314.66
Sand Dunes	11,040	5,813	4	54.99
Birch Lakes	630	527	0	6.59
Totals	1,016,205	54,595	246	376.24
Scattered Outside-Forest Acreage & Inventory				
County	DNR-Administered Lands (Acres)		Inventory Routes by County (Miles)	
Rice	588		0.00	
Le Sueur	80		0.00	
Sherburne	121		0.00	
Hennepin	5		0.00	
Morrison	2884		4.15	
Benton	120		2.77	
Stearns	247		0.00	
Kandiyohi	200		0.00	
Martin	51		0.00	
Nicollet	47		0.00	
Meeker	41		0.00	
Sibley	40		0.00	
Yellow Medicine	2		0.00	
Totals	4426		6.92	

MOTOR VEHICLE USE CLASSIFICATION

Minnesota Law requires the Commissioner of Natural Resources to complete a review of the classification of State Forest lands for motor vehicle use by December 31, 2008. The process and criteria for forest classification are contained in Minnesota Rules part 6100.1950. subp. 2. The State Forest motor vehicle use classifications are characterized as follows:

Managed Forest Lands. All state forest roads and trails are open to recreational motor vehicle use unless posted closed. These forest lands are characterized by a low intensity of use by OHVs, a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities, widely dispersed use, and little competition among visitors for recreational use of the land. Signing and enforcement restrict motor vehicle use in sensitive resource areas and on designated recreational trails. ATVs may be operated on non-designated routes and off trail under the hunting and trapping exceptions except within the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest. ORVs and HLVs may be operated on non-designated routes under the hunting and trapping exceptions except within the Richard

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J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest. When using motor vehicles on unsigned routes it is illegal to operate the vehicle in a manner that causes erosion or rutting or injures, damages, or destroys trees or growing crops. The *managed* classification can only be applied to forest lands north of US Highway 2.

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

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). Snowmobiles may operate on designated trails. These lands are characterized by high susceptibility to damage by motorized use or have a history that precludes motorized use. Areas closed to motor vehicle use by statute or regulations (e.g., State Forest lands within the BWCAW) are automatically classified as *closed*. The hunting and trapping exceptions do not apply in *closed* forests.

The following criteria are considered when classifying forest lands for motor vehicle use:

- A. resource sensitivity and management objectives;
- B. resource impact by motorized and non-motorized use, including erosion, rutting, and impacts on vegetation, wildlife, air, water, or natural habitats;
- C. motorized and non-motorized 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 non-motor vehicle use in the area;
- G. competing interests among different user groups; and
- H. public safety and law enforcement concerns.

LANDS COVERED BY THIS CLASSIFICATION REVIEW

This motor vehicle use classification review covers State Forest lands in the Southern Minnesota Forests Unit. Scattered State Forest lands evaluated are located in Sherburne, Morrison, Benton, Kandiyohi, Martin, Nicollet, Meeker, Sibley, Yellow Medicine, Hennepin, Stearns, Houston, Fillmore, Olmsted, Winona, Wabasha, Goodhue, Dakota, Rice and Le Sueur Counties. The planning unit covers approximately 8,772,825 acres.

INSIDE STATE FOREST BOUNDARIES

There are three named State Forests with statutorily-defined boundaries within the planning unit. The Sand Dunes State Forest that has a gross acreage of about 11,040 acres, of which about 5,813 acres administered by the DNR Division of Forestry, the Birch Lakes State Forest

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that has a gross acreage of about 630 acres, of which about 527 acres administered by the DNR Division of Forestry and the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest that has a gross acreage of about 1,016,205 acres, of which about 48,255 acres administered by the DNR Division of Forestry are each covered by this review.

The motor vehicle use classification and related State Forest rules do not apply on federal, tribal, or private lands within State Forest boundaries. The classification and rules do not apply to state lands administered by DNR divisions other than the Division of Forestry, such as State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, Scientific & Natural Areas, or State Trails.

OUTSIDE STATE FOREST BOUNDARIES

The Southern Minnesota Forest Planning Unit includes about 4,425 acres of scattered State Forest land administered by the DNR Division of Forestry outside of the State Forest boundaries. This land is inside Sherburne, Morrison, Benton, Kandiyohi, Martin, Nicollet, Meeker, Sibley, Yellow Medicine, Hennepin, Stearns, Houston, Fillmore, Olmsted, Winona, Wabasha, Goodhue, Dakota, Rice and Le Sueur Counties and is treated as State Forest land covered by this classification review.

This motor vehicle use classification does not apply on federal, tribal, or private lands outside of State Forest boundaries. The classification and rules do not apply to state lands administered by DNR divisions other than the Division of Forestry, such as State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, Scientific & Natural Areas, or State Trails.

CLASSIFICATION EVALUATION PROCESS

DNR Southern Minnesota Forest Planning Group members reviewed the classification criteria, collected data related to classification, and gathered input from other DNR staff, and the public. Two public open houses were conducted on March 5th and March 6th, 2008. DNR also received written input from the public; in the form of comment forms, letters, and e-mails. Potential options for classification schemes were discussed that resulted in the proposed classifications presented in this draft plan. Preliminary recommendations to classify Sand Dunes and Birch Lakes State Forests as “*closed*” and Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest and the scattered lands as “*limited*” set the stage for an intensive route-by-route evaluation exercise that followed.

The planning group considered applying either a *limited* or *closed* classification for the **Sand Dunes State Forest**. The preliminary recommendation was to classify all State Forest lands as *closed*, with all DNR Forestry-administered lands south of US Highway 2 to be designated as an Area with Limitations on Off-trail and Non-designated Trail Use pursuant to M.S. 84.926, subd. 5. This latter measure was considered important to protect important recreation values and sensitive resources. Previously permitted use of ATVs within the Sand Dunes State Forest had proven to be incompatible with the sensitive landscapes and unstable, highly erodable soils. Classifying the forest as *closed* will protect the area from impacts that may occur from off-trail travel by ATVs as permitted under the big game hunting and trapping exception provided in M.S. 84.926, subd. 2. Equestrian use has become the established/traditional use for the area. This set the stage for examination of routes on DNR-administered lands and development of recommended designations of inventoried routes as forest roads and trails.

The planning group considered applying either a *limited* or *closed* classification for the **Birch Lakes State Forest**. The preliminary recommendation was to classify all State Forest lands as *closed*, with all DNR Forestry-administered lands south of US Highway 2 to be designated as an Area with Limitations on Off-trail and Non-designated Trail Use pursuant to M.S. 84.926, subd.

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5. This latter measure was considered important to protect important recreation values and sensitive riparian areas from impacts that may occur from off-trail travel by ATVs as permitted under the big game hunting and trapping exception provided in M.S. 84.926, subd. 2. This set the stage for examination of the limited miles of routes on DNR-administered lands and development of recommended designations of inventoried routes as forest roads and trails. The Birch lakes State Forest is only 630 acres in size and has had a tradition of equestrian use.

The planning group considered applying either a *limited* or *closed* classification for the **Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest**. Both approaches presented management and enforcement challenges given the checkerboard, patchwork nature of public land ownership dotted throughout the forest. Consideration of the fact that several of the recreation units within the forest have established motorized uses was also a factored into the classification process. This set the stage for examination of routes on DNR-administered lands and development of recommended designations of inventoried routes as forest roads and trails.

The planning group members considered and developed recommendations for forest classifications and road and trail designations over the period March 2008 to June 2008; these are provided for public review and comment over the period July 7 – September 12, 2008. Draft and final recommendations for forest classifications and specific trail designation recommendations are based upon statutory criteria, an evaluation of existing conditions, and review of existing use levels and patterns. The planning group members sought to protect natural resources and further resource management objectives through these recommendations.

EXISTING MOTOR VEHICLE USE CLASSIFICATION

Motor vehicle use has generally been allowed in most State Forests. As the number of OHVs increased, the DNR closed some forests to OHV use and began developing trails and other facilities for OHV use in other State Forests. In late 1996, the agency began to reassess its OHV management programs. The DNR proposed classifying State Forests as *managed*, *limited*, or *closed* with respect to motor vehicle use. In May 1998 a series of public open houses were held to discuss the proposed classifications of State Forests for motor vehicle use. On September 3, 1998 the Commissioner of Natural Resources issued a memorandum establishing interim classifications for all State Forests. The interim classifications became permanent on January 1, 2000. The classification for all DNR Division of Forestry-administered State Forest land in the Southern Minnesota Forests Unit is currently *managed*.

ADOPTED CLASSIFICATIONS

The State Forests and/or associated scattered State Forest lands in the Southern Minnesota Forests Planning Unit must be reclassified as either *limited* or *closed* to comply with current Minnesota law. The DNR Southern Minnesota Forests Road & Trail Designation Planning Group discussed alternative classification proposals and developed classification recommendations for State Forest lands in the planning area. The primary reasons supporting the classification recommendation for the State Forest lands in the planning unit are presented below. All criteria listed in Minn. Rules part 61 00.1950, subpart 2 must be considered under the final classification review.

The planning group recommends that the Commissioner of Natural Resources classify State Forest lands within the planning area as described in the following text.

Sand Dunes STATE FOREST – CLOSED

The Sand Dunes State Forest is located in central Sherburne County, about three miles west of Zimmerman and five miles north of Big Lake, MN. The forest's statutory boundary encompasses 11040 acres. The DNR Division of Forestry administers 5,813 acres of this total acreage. The balance, includes 5,223 acres is in private ownership and four acres in county ownership. The area was farmed until the drought of the "Dust Bowl" (1933-34) when the light, worn out sandy soils in the area began to drift. Concerned citizens planted a variety of tree species in an attempt to stabilize the soils. Over 2,400 acres of tree plantations are now established within the Sand Dunes State Forest.

The outdoor recreation facilities in the Sand Dunes State Forest include the Bob Dunn Recreation Area, Ann Lake Day Use Area, Sand Dunes Horse Camp and includes 18 miles of trails available for horseback riding and hiking and are groomed in the winter for snowmobiling.

DNR received public input from the open houses and directly from individuals and groups throughout the preliminary designation process in the spring of 2008. Comments were both general and forest-specific. General comments provided both support and concern for continued equestrian trails on public lands in Minnesota, coupled with statements regarding trail: impacts, damage, sustainability, enforcement, funding, monitoring, and maintenance. Issues raised in public comments specific to the Sand Dunes State Forest are generalized below:

- Requests for DNR to adopt a *closed* classification.
- This forest is fragile ecosystem; sensitive nature of natural communities to impacts from motorized uses, especially in terms of soils, erosion, water quality, vegetation, wildlife.
- Designated trail systems needed for quality non-motorized recreational experience.
- Forest not suited to motorized recreation.
- Maintain or increase miles of equestrian opportunities and trail miles.

All state land within the Sand Dunes State Forest statutory boundaries are currently classified as "*closed*". The planning group recommends continuation of a "*closed*" classification for the Sand Dunes State Forest for public review and comment. The soils within the Sand Dunes State Forest will not support sustainable motorized use. Only non-motorized trail designations are proposed in the plan. Horse riding has a history as an established use within the forest and will be retained as a permitted use.

Birch Lakes STATE FOREST – CLOSED

The Birch Lakes State Forest is located Stearns County about 10 miles north of Interstate 94 and the cities of Freeport and Melrose. The forest lies between Big and Little Birch Lakes and includes two hundred yards of shoreline on Big Birch Lake. The forest's statutory boundary encompasses just over 630 acres. The DNR Division of Forestry administers 527.40 acres of this total acreage with the balance of 103.60 acres in private ownership.

Birch Lakes State Forest is managed primarily as a recreation area due to its small size. The forest, however does produce timber, provides habitat for wildlife and is used to demonstrate forest management principles. The forest includes a campground, day use area, water access, hiking and snowmobile trails. Recreational motor vehicles and horses have been prohibited from using any of the

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trails in the forest.

DNR received public input from the open houses and directly from individuals and groups throughout the preliminary designation process in the spring of 2008. Few public comments specific to the Birch Lakes State Forest were received. Established uses include equestrian and mountain biking and due to the small size and sensitive resources the forest is not well suited for motorized recreation.

All state land within the Birch Lakes State Forest statutory boundaries are currently classified as “*closed*”. The planning group considered the appropriateness of a *closed* versus *limited* classification for the Birch Lakes State Forest. In considering the most desirable future condition, particular attention was paid to addressing what framework of public access best recognized the need to protect sensitive natural areas. The planning group recommends continuation a “*closed*” classification for the Sand Dunes State Forest for public review and comment. Only non-motorized trail designations are proposed in the plan.

Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood STATE FOREST - LIMITED

The Richard J. Dorer State Forest is located in the southeast corner of MN. The forest’s statutory boundary encompasses 1,016,205 acres. The DNR Division of Forestry administers 48,255 acres of this total acreage with the balance of 3,012 acres owned by private forest industries, 964,678 acres in private ownership and 260 acres in county ownership.

The Richard J. Dorer State Forest is unusual in that most of the land is held in private ownership and the majority is not forested. The forested lands are concentrated in eleven management units. They are Brightsdale, Bronk, Hay Creek, Isinours, Kruger, Reno, Snake Creek, Trout Valley, Vinegar Ridge (Money Creek), Wet Bark (Oak Ridge) and Zumbro Bottoms. These units provide a variety of recreational opportunities. For example, the Hay Creek Management Unit, just south of Red Wing, occupies the slopes and valley of its namesake. Hay Creek is popular with trout anglers and its 16 miles of bridle paths are a favorite with horseback riders. Zumbro Bottoms includes three campgrounds and 46 miles of bridle paths that draw up to 20,000 horseback riders a year. The Snake Creek and Trout Valley units lie on slopes facing the Mississippi River, halfway between Wabasha and Winona. They are the only units in the Dorer forest with trails open to off-road vehicles. Mountain bikers use the non-motorized trails of the Bronk unit near Winona. And hikers seeking steep, isolated trails travel to the Reno unit where they are provided with an overlook of the Mississippi River near the Iowa border.

Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest produces high-quality hardwoods such as red and white oak. Other important trees in the southeast are various maple species and white pine and a small share of the harvest being ash, elm, cottonwood, basswood, and black walnut.

DNR received considerable public input from the open houses and directly from individuals and groups throughout the preliminary designation process. Comments were both general and forest-specific. General comments ranged from strong support to strong concern for OHV, OHM and equestrian trails on public lands in Minnesota, coupled with statements regarding trail impacts, damage, sustainability, enforcement, funding, monitoring, and maintenance. Issues raised in public comments specific to the Richard J. Dorer State Forest are generalized below:

- The forest units are fragile ecosystems; sensitive nature of natural communities to

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- impacts from motorized uses, especially in terms of soils, erosion, water quality, vegetation, and wildlife and therefore may not be suited to motorized recreation.
- Designated trail systems needed for quality motorized recreational experience.
 - Incompatibility of motorized and non-motorized uses, especially for silent sport enthusiasts, safety and need for buffer.
 - Maintain or increase equestrian opportunities and trail miles.
 - Extensive damage already present from OHVs.
 - Maintain or increase miles and opportunities for OHV trails.
 - Need for increased opportunities and events for OHMs
 - Need for a facility like the Gilbert Iron Range Off-highway Vehicle Recreation Area
 - Develop trails connecting use areas and other trails for both ATVs and Horses

The planning group expended great effort considering the appropriateness of a *closed* versus *limited* classification for the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest. The group recognized that the management of public access and recreation has been variable. In considering the most desirable future condition, particular attention was paid to addressing what framework of public access best recognized the need to protect sensitive natural areas while recognizing many routes could sustain varying degrees of motorized use. The planning group recommends a "*limited*" classification for the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest for public review and comment.

It should be noted that the cross-country travel by ATVs for big game hunting activities (i.e., M.S. 84.926, subd. 4) does not apply within the Richard Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / BENTON COUNTY – *LIMITED*

The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 120 acres of DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Benton County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

The scattered State Forest land parcels in Benton County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

All State Forest lands within Benton County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a "*limited*" classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Benton County. About 2.7 miles of inventoried routes occur on these acres, with a recommendation for all miles to retain a non-designated status. These routes were too short to warrant designated forest roads or recreational trails, including non-motorized ones. A limited classification will allow historic big game hunting and trapping access as afforded under M.S. Section 84.926, subd. 2 and 4, while protecting other resource values. Public access for other utilitarian purposes, such as berry picking, will only be possible by foot travel, or other non-motorized methods, on non-designated routes under a limited classification.

The Department received no comments from the public specific to the proposed motor vehicle use classification or designations of forest roads on the DNR Forestry-administered state forest lands in Benton County during the preliminary designation process in the spring of 2008.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / HENNEPIN COUNTY – *LIMITED*

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The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 5 acres of DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Hennepin County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

The scattered State Forest land parcels in Hennepin County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

All State Forest lands within Hennepin County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a "*limited*" classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Hennepin County for public review and comment. There were zero miles of inventoried routes occurring on these acres.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / KANDIYOHI COUNTY – LIMITED

The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 200 acres of DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Kandiyohi County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

The scattered State Forest land parcels in Kandiyohi County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

All State Forest lands within Kandiyohi County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a "*limited*" classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Kandiyohi County for public review and comment. There were zero miles of inventoried routes occurring on these acres.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / LE SUEUR COUNTY – LIMITED

The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 80 acres DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Le Sueur County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

The scattered State Forest land parcels in Le Sueur County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

All State Forest lands within Le Sueur County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a "*limited*" classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Le Sueur County for public review and comment. There were zero miles of inventoried routes occurring on these acres.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / MARTIN COUNTY – LIMITED

The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 51 acres DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Martin County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

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The scattered State Forest land parcels in Martin County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

All State Forest lands within Martin County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a “*limited*” classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Martin County for public review and comment. There were zero miles of inventoried routes occurring on these acres.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / MEEKER COUNTY – LIMITED

The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 41 acres DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Meeker County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

The scattered State Forest land parcels in Meeker County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

All State Forest lands within Meeker County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a “*limited*” classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Meeker County for public review and comment. There were zero miles of inventoried routes occurring on these acres.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / MORRISON COUNTY – LIMITED

The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 2,884 acres DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Morrison County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

The scattered State Forest land parcels in Morrison County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

All State Forest lands within Morrison County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a “*limited*” classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Morrison County for public review and comment. About 4.15 miles of inventoried routes occur on these acres, with a recommendation for 0.47 miles to be designated as Minimum Maintenance Road, 3.51 miles to be non-motorized and 0.17 miles to be all miles to retain a non-designated status. A *limited* classification will allow historic big game hunting and trapping access as afforded under M.S. Section 84.926, subd. 2 and 4, while protecting other resource values. Public access for other utilitarian purposes, such as berry picking, will only be possible by foot travel, or other non-motorized methods, on non-designated routes under a *limited* classification.

The Department received no comments from the public specific to the proposed motor vehicle use classification or designations of forest roads on the DNR Forestry-administered state forest lands in Morrison County during the preliminary designation process in the spring of 2008.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / NICOLLET COUNTY – LIMITED

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The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 47 acres DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Nicollet County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

The scattered State Forest land parcels in Nicollet County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

All State Forest lands within Nicollet County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a "*limited*" classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Nicollet County for public review and comment. There were zero miles of inventoried routes occurring on these acres.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / RICE COUNTY – LIMITED

The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 589 acres DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Rice County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

The scattered State Forest land parcels in Rice County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

All State Forest lands within Rice County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a "*limited*" classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Rice County for public review and comment. There were zero miles of inventoried routes occurring on these acres.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / SHERBURNE COUNTY – LIMITED

The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 121 acres DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Sherburne County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

The scattered State Forest land parcels in Sherburne County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

All State Forest lands within Sherburne County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a "*limited*" classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Sherburne County for public review and comment. There were zero miles of inventoried routes occurring on these acres.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / SIBLEY COUNTY – LIMITED

The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 40 acres DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Sibley County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

The scattered State Forest land parcels in Sibley County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

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All State Forest lands within Sibley County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a “*limited*” classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Sibley County for public review and comment. There were zero miles of inventoried routes occurring on these acres.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / STEARNS COUNTY – LIMITED

The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 121 acres DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Stearns County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

The scattered State Forest land parcels in Stearns County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

All State Forest lands within Stearns County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a “*limited*” classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Stearns County for public review and comment. There were zero miles of inventoried routes occurring on these acres.

SCATTERED STATE FOREST LANDS / YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY – LIMITED

The Southern Minnesota Planning unit includes approximately 2 acres DNR Forestry-administered land in scattered tracts outside of State Forest Boundaries within Yellow Medicine County that are managed as State Forest Land and thus need forest classification for motor vehicle use.

The scattered State Forest land parcels in Yellow Medicine County occur as both Minnesota School Trust Lands and other non-trust parcels.

All State Forest lands within Yellow Medicine County are currently classified as *limited*. The planning group recommends a “*limited*” classification for the scattered State Forest lands in Yellow Medicine County for public review and comment. There were zero miles of inventoried routes occurring on these acres.

FOREST ROUTE INVENTORY

In preparation for this road and trail designation process, the DNR Southern Minnesota Planning Group compiled available information on the existing roads, trails, and routes that show evidence of continuing human use on all State Forest lands in the planning area. Geographic information system (GIS) data on public highways was obtained from the MN Department of Transportation. GIS data on previously designated forest roads was collected from the DNR. Data on previously designated recreational trails was collated.

In 2003 and 2004, DNR staff made an effort to inventory the location and condition of all existing but previously undocumented forest access routes on state- and county-administered forest lands that show evidence of ongoing human use. Field crews inventoried most of the access routes using ATVs equipped with global positioning system (GPS) units. The location of some routes that were not passable with ATVs, for example winter use timber harvest routes, were digitized from aerial photos. Field crews recorded locations where the access routes intersected with routes that were too narrow or unsafe for ATV access. They also recorded

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locations where the routes ended. Inventory crews collected data such as tread width, apparent use, level of use, and surface condition. All forest route data was entered into GIS databases and was used in recommending forest road and trail designations.

While reasonable efforts were made to correct the travel routes data there are inherent limitations on the completeness and accuracy of the forest route inventory data. Highway authorities are continually adding, rerouting, and abandoning highways. Public land ownership patterns change as lands are acquired, sold, or exchanged. Natural resource management activities, fires, and timber sales create or obliterate forest access routes. Unused trails and routes re-vegetate, beavers flood routes, and what is a passable route in a dry year maybe impassable in wet years. The forest route inventory showed 383.01 miles of routes on State Forest lands in the Southern Minnesota Planning Unit.

Table 3. Summary of Forest Route Inventory by County

(*Routes represent every surveyed mile of trails prior to proposed designations.)

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, 2008. DNR DRS. Generated Using ArcView Extension

Sand Dunes State Forest (Sherburne CO.)	Miles
Total	54.99

Birch Lakes State Forest (Stearns Co.)	Miles
Total	6.59

Richard J. Dorer State Forest	Miles
Houston	69.68
Filmore	58.07
Olmsted	6.99
Winona	45.80
Wabasha	104.94
Goodhue	29.07
Dakota	0.00
Total	314.66

Outside of State Forest / DNR-managed Only	Miles
Rice	0.00
Le Sueur	0.00
Hennepin	0.00
Morrison	4.15
Benton	2.77
Kandiyohi	0.00
Martin	0.00
Nicollet	0.00
Meeker	0.00
Sibley	0.00
Yellow Medicine	0.00
Total	6.92

ROUTE DESIGNATION POLICIES AND PROCESS

Minnesota's State Forests are managed to produce timber, provide outdoor recreation, protect watersheds, and perpetuate rare and distinctive species of native flora and fauna. State Forests are managed to ensure they remain healthy, vital, and productive for the present and for future generations. State Forests provide a variety of unstructured outdoor recreation opportunities, such as hunting, trapping, berry picking, and nature observation. For more structured activities, many State Forests contain recreation facilities with campgrounds, day-use areas, and trails for various motorized and non-motorized uses. Minnesota statutes set broad direction for management of State Forests by directing the Commissioner of Natural Resources to:

- Manage State Forests according to the principles of multiple use and sustained yield under M.S. Section 89.002, subd. 1; and
- Provide a system of forest roads and trails to access State Forest lands under M.S. Section 89.002, subd. 3.

Minnesota Rules part 6100.1950 contains policies and regulations for public use of motor vehicles on State Forest land. It also provides a process for forest classification, including public notice and review requirements.

DEVELOPMENT OF ACCESS PROPOSALS

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

The proposed designations were developed using the forest route inventory data, local land managers' knowledge of the routes, and data from other sources such as soils maps, wetland maps, forest inventory data, and the Natural Heritage Elements database. A work group consisting of DNR staff from all disciplines met approximately 8 times between March 2008 and April 2008 to evaluate the entire Southern Minnesota Planning Unit. Public open houses were held in March 2008 as another source of information to be considered by the group. For routes that had been managed as state forest roads or recreational trails in the past, the presumption was that previous designation and uses would be continued unless there was a compelling reason to propose changes. The workgroup will meet again in September 2008 to review the comments and recommend changes made during the official public review period for incorporation into the final plan (based on public input).

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

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PROPOSED DESIGNATIONS

DNR's Southern Minnesota Forests Road & Trail Designation Planning Group conducted a route-by-route review of the 2003 – 2004 inventory and developed a recommended future designation status for all 383 miles of routes on DNR Forestry-administered lands in the Southern Minnesota Planning Unit.

The Draft Plan provides proposed forest road and trail recommendations for DNR-managed lands within the statutory boundary of the Sand Dunes State Forest, Birch lakes State Forest and Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest. Recommendations for scattered State Forest lands are offered only for DNR Forestry-administered parcels outside the forest boundaries. All parties are committed to a motor vehicle management system that protects natural resources, serves public needs, and complies with existing laws and rules. The routes that are proposed by DNR for each type of designation are shown on the maps that are part of this Proposed Plan.

ROUTE DESIGNATION SUMMARY

The miles of routes proposed to receive various administrative designations are identified below. This Proposed Plan addresses 376.24 miles of inventoried routes on State Forest lands within the Sand Dunes, Birch Lakes and Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forests' statutory boundaries and 6.92 miles of routes on scattered State Forest lands in the portions of Morrison and Benton Counties. The routes are also shown on the maps that accompany this plan.

See Table 4, Forest Road and Trail Designation Summary-Southern Minnesota Planning Unit.

FOREST ROADS

Forest roads are routes that are maintained by resource management agencies to provide access to public forest lands for resource management and public use. Forest roads range from unimproved, double track with a native soil surface to two-lane gravel roads with improved drainage. Forest roads are not considered "public highways" and the resource agencies are not "road authorities." Each agency sets public use rules and determines the types of vehicles allowed on the forest roads it manages.

Table 4. Proposed Forest Road and Trail Designation Summary of the Southern MN Planning Unit

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, 2008. DNR DRS. Generated Using ArcView Extension

Designation Category	Within-Forest Inventory (Miles)	
	Land Administrator	Total
Forest Roads	DNR	25.90
System Forest Road	24.08	24.08
MMR	1.82	1.82
Trails	206.52	206.52
ATV-only Trail	21.53	21.53
Non-motorized Trails	206.52	206.52
Accessible Trails	0.75	0.75
Proactive Closures	7.26	7.26
Non-designated Routes	136.56	136.56
Total Inventoried Routes	376.24	376.24
DNR-Managed Lands / Outside-Forest Inventory		
Designation Category		Total
Forest Roads		0.47
System Forest Road		0.00
MMR		0.47
Trails		3.51
Non-designated Routes		2.94
Total Inventoried Routes		6.92

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

1. "State forest road" means a road constructed, acquired, maintained, or administered by the commissioner for the purpose of carrying out forest resource management ..." (M.S. Section 89.00 1, subd. 14)
2. "The commissioner shall provide a system of forest roads and trails which provides access to state forest land ..." (M.S. Section 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 ..." (M.S. Section 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..." (M.S. Section 89.71, subd. 5)

State Forest Roads are generally open to use by both highway-licensed vehicles and off-highway vehicles (ATVs, OHMs, and ORVs). However, forest roads may be temporarily closed, at any time, to some or all vehicular use due to public safety and/or natural resource protection considerations. State Forest Roads may be closed seasonally or temporarily to address specific road or fire conditions. The DNR divides State Forest Roads into two classes – System Roads and Minimum Maintenance Roads – based upon their condition, intended use, and planned maintenance level.

System Roads are the major roads in the forest that provide forest management

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access, recreational access, and links to state, county, or township public roads. System roads are used on a daily or weekly basis, and are maintained to allow travel by highway licensed vehicles.

The proposed Plan includes designation of approximately 24.08 miles of System State Forest Roads within the planning area. These roads will be managed by the DNR and will typically be open to HLVs and OHVs. These roads can be located on multiple ownerships.

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

The proposed Plan includes designation of approximately 2.29 miles of Minimum Maintenance State Forest Roads within the planning area. These roads will be managed by the DNR and will typically be open to HLVs and OHVs but they may not be maintained to a level where low-clearance vehicles can routinely travel on them. A total of 1.82 miles of minimum maintenance road is proposed within the State Forests boundaries.

RECREATIONAL FOREST TRAILS

M.S. 89.19, subd. 2 authorizes the Commissioner of Natural Resources to designate forest trails under prescribed procedures. Designated forest trails provide access to the State Forests for a range of purposes, both recreational and utilitarian. The Commissioner may designate motorized or non-motorized trails, and may align with or include local loop systems or regional corridor trails with associated support facilities (e.g., parking or staging areas, toilets, trailhead, day-use picnic sites). These trails have designated primary uses, are well signed, monitored, and maintained, and are mapped and listed in DNR publications.

This plan recommends designations for both motor and non-motor forest trails managed by DNR that are also known as "unit trails." No Grant-in-Aid (GIA) trail recommendations are offered.

NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS

The Proposed Plan designates a total of 206.52 miles of non-motorized trail in the Southern Minnesota Planning Unit.

There are many opportunities for non-motorized recreation beyond the designated and maintained trails. Hiking is allowed on forest roads and trails that are designated for other uses. Foot travel is also allowed on non-designated routes, although these routes are not signed, mapped, or maintained for hiking or any other recreational use.

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ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE (ATV) TRAILS

ATVs are permitted to operate on forest roads, and on forest trails specifically designated for ATV use subject to seasonal road and/or trail closures. This plan designates 47.90 miles of routes that are to be open to ATVs on DNR Forestry-administered lands. Of this amount, 21.53 miles are designated ATV-only trail on State Forest lands with the balance of 26.37 miles available for ATV use being provided by system and minimum maintenance forest roads. Proposed ATV trail designations have been selected primarily to address

All proposed forest roads and ATV trails will be open to Class 1 ATVs. Operation of Class 2 ATVs will be permissible on all forest roads.

OFF-HIGHWAY MOTORCYCLE (OHM) TRAILS

OHMs are permitted to operate on forest roads and trails specifically designated for OHM use subject to temporary and/or seasonal closures. This plan recommends a total of 21.53 miles of designated routes are open to OHMs on state- managed forest lands.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE (ORV) TRAILS

ORVs are permitted to operate on forest roads and trails specifically designated for ORV use. No ORV-only trail designations are proposed under the Final Plan for DNR- forest lands. Both ORVs and HLVs may operate on state forest roads, subject to seasonal road and/or trail closures and/or weight restrictions.

NON-DESIGNATED ROUTES – IMPLICATIONS FROM CLASSIFICATION

A total of 139.50 miles of existing routes will be non-designated under this proposal. These routes are open to non-motorized recreation but will not normally be signed or actively managed. Within the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest equestrian and mountain bike use is only allowed on trails specifically designated for those uses. Differences between the assignments of a *limited* versus *closed* forest classification on non-designated routes are highlighted below. Complete closure of trails is also discussed.

NON-DESIGNATED ROUTES – LIMITED CLASSIFICATION

DNR Forestry-Administered Forest Lands. Non-designated routes are closed to motor vehicle use within the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest.

NON-DESIGNATED ROUTES – CLOSED CLASSIFICATION

No inventory is present on state forest lands classified *closed*.

PROACTIVE CLOSURES

Those non-designated routes that are unsuited for motor vehicle use, or showing signs of damage, have been proactively closed. Closed routes will have signs, gates, or barricades to clearly indicate that motor vehicle use is not permitted. Proactive closures are proposed for

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7.26 miles within the Richard J. Dorer State Forest for the Zumbro Bottoms Recreation Unit within Wabasha County.

DESIGNATION MAPS

The proposed forest road and trail designations for State Forest lands in the Southern Minnesota Planning Unit are depicted on a series of Route Designation Maps, which are incorporated by reference into this Proposed Plan. The map is available on the DNR website. A CD containing the map in a Portable Document Format (PDF) is available upon request.

PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

60-day Public Review Period starts July 7, 2008 and ends at 4:30 PM on September 12, 2008. Comments and recommendations received will be reviewed and used to make any further revision to the plan before a final draft is completed.

PUBLIC NOTICES

The proposed classification of the State Forest lands for motor vehicle use and the proposed road and trail designations in this Proposed plan reflect public review and comment. A public notice announcing the availability of the proposed classification and designations was published in the *State Register* (November 13, 2007; Vol. 32: No. 20; p. 878), and the legal newspapers for Beltrami, Clearwater, and Hubbard Counties. A statewide DNR news release announced the availability of the draft plan for public review on July 7, 2008.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

One public open house meeting was held no sooner than 60 days following the *State Register* notice.

Public Meeting. Public meetings are scheduled for Wednesday, September 10, 2008 from 6:00 to 8:30 PM at the Sherburne County Govt. Center, Maple Room 13880 Highway 10, Elk River 55330 and on Thursday September 10th, 2008 from 6:00 to 8:30 PM at the The People's Coop, Big Rectangular Room, 3935 Highway 14 East, Rochester 55904. DNR's Southern Minnesota Planning Group and area staff familiar with the Sand Dunes and Birch Lakes State Forest, Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest and scattered State Forest lands will attend.

The first hour of the meeting allowed attendees to informally review the draft plan, maps, and other summary materials. DNR and other cooperating government agencies were on hand to answer questions regarding motorized access planning in terms of forest classification and proposed designations for public forest lands in these counties. During the remainder of the meeting, DNR staff will present information, respond to questions, and receive public comment on the proposals. Written comments will also be accepted.

COMMENTING

Reviewers should provide comment regarding the proposed: forest classifications; road/trail designations; Areas with Limitation on Off-Trail and Non-Designated trail Uses; and other information deemed relevant to future DNR decisions. Comments should be specific to individual state forests or scattered land parcels. Comments on specific routes should

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reference the specific Route Identification Number that is present for each route on the maps.

The DNR will consider both formal and informal public input during the forest classification review, the road/trail designation process. Written comments can be provided throughout the process. DNR's consideration of formal comments will be documented in the Responses to Public Comments that are incorporated by reference into the Final Plan and associated classification review and designations of forest roads/trails.

DNR will accept public comment on the Draft Plan and Proposed Classification Review until 4:30 PM on September 12, 2008.

Written comments should be directed to:

Michele Hanson
MDNR Central Region Headquarters
1200 Warner Road
St Paul, Minnesota 55106
Michele.hanson@dnr.state.mn.us FAX: 651-772-7977

Questions can also be directed to Michele Hanson at 651-259-5785.

CHANGES BETWEEN THE FINAL PLAN AND THE DRAFT PLAN

Necessary changes will be made to the draft plan that are reflective of : 1) corrections to the draft plan; 2) consideration of comment(s) from the public; and/or 3) new information that became available since release of the draft plan.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

A public notice of this proposal will be published in the *State Register* and the Winona, Rochester and St Cloud legal newspapers announcing the public review period and public meeting date. A statewide DNR news release and paid legal notices will accompany the notice, and public meetings will be held in September 2007 to invite comment on this proposal.

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

ADOPTION OF THE CLASSIFICATION AND ROAD/TRAIL DESIGNATION PLAN

The recommendations contained in the Final Plan will be implemented through Commissioner's Orders that are published in the *State Register*.

ROAD AND TRAIL DEVELOPMENT AND SIGNING PROJECTS

After the Commissioner publishes motor vehicle use classification and road & trail designation orders, the DNR will implement the plan by developing and signing roads and trails. Required permits will be obtained when site-level development projects are implemented.

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The DNR is committed to substantially completing the development and signing of forest roads and trails as proposed in the final plan prior to the effective date provided in the classification order.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF CHANGE IN MOTOR VEHICLE USE CLASSIFICATION

The effective date for the change in motor vehicle use classification of state forest lands, forest road and trail designations is December 31, 2009.

ONGOING MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT

The DNR is committed to providing both motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities on State Forest Lands. A guiding principle for recreational trails is “managed use on managed trails.” The intent is to provide quality recreational experiences on environmentally sustainable non-motorized and motorized trails. The DNR will use approved best management practices for forest roads and trails.

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

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

Appendices

Minnesota Statutes and Rules Related to State Forest Classification

Minnesota Laws 2003, Chapter 128, Article 1, Section 167 as amended by Minnesota Laws 2005, 1st Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 2, Section 152

Sec. 167. [FOREST LAND OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE USE RECLASSIFICATION.]
Subdivision 1. [FOREST CLASSIFICATION STATUS REVIEW.]

- (a) By December 31, 2006, the commissioner of natural resources shall complete a review of the forest classification status of all state forests classified as managed or limited, all forest lands under the authority of the commissioner as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 89.001, subdivision 13, and lands managed by the commissioner under Minnesota Statutes, section 282.011. The review must be conducted on a forest-by-forest and area-by-area basis in accordance with the process and criteria under Minnesota Rules, part 6100.1950. Except as provided in paragraph (d), after each forest is reviewed, the commissioner must change its status to limited or closed, and must provide a similar status for each of the other areas subject to review under this section after each individual review is completed.
- (b) If the commissioner determines on January 1, 2005, that the review required under this section cannot be completed by December 31, 2006, the completion date for the review shall be extended to December 31, 2008. By January 15, 2005, the commissioner shall report to the chairs of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over natural resources policy and finance regarding the status of the process required by this section.
- (c) Until December 31, 2010, the state forests and areas subject to review under this section are exempt from Minnesota Statutes, section 84.777, unless an individual forest or area has been classified as limited or closed.
- (d) Notwithstanding the restrictions in paragraph (a), and Minnesota Statutes, section 84.777, all forest lands under the authority of the commissioner as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 89.001, subdivision 13, and lands managed by the commissioner under Minnesota Statutes, section 282.011, that are north of U.S. Highway 2 shall maintain their present classification unless the commissioner reclassifies the lands under Minnesota Rules, part 6100.1950. The commissioner shall provide for seasonal trail closures when conditions warrant them. By December 31, 2008, the commissioner shall complete the review and designate trails on forest lands north of Highway 2 as provided in this section.

Subdivision 2. [TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW.]

The requirements for environmental review under Minnesota Statutes, section 1 16D.04, and rules of the environmental quality board are temporarily suspended for each reclassification and trail designation made under subdivision 1 until the commissioner has met all requirements under subdivision 1, or December 31, 2008, if the commissioner has failed to complete those requirements as required by law.

Minnesota Rules Chapter 6100.1950, subparts 1 – 4

6100.1950 MOTOR VEHICLES AND SNOWMOBILES; FOREST LANDS.

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

A. Motor vehicles may operate on forest lands classified as managed on forest roads and forest trails that are not posted and designated closed, subject to the limitations and exceptions in this part.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Subp. 5. **Nonmotorized trails.** No person shall operate a motor vehicle or snowmobile on forest lands on a designated nonmotorized trail, including ski, foot, horse, bike, or accessible trail, unless the trail is also posted open for a motorized use.

Subp. 6. **Lakes, rivers, and streams.** No person shall operate a motor vehicle on forest lands on or over the beds of lakes, rivers, or streams when ice is not covering the water body, except on a bridge, culvert, or similar structure or designated low water crossing.

Subp. 7. **Other prohibitions and exceptions.**

A. No person shall operate a motor vehicle or snowmobile on forest lands in a manner that causes erosion or rutting or injures, damages, or destroys trees or growing crops. The rutting prohibition does not apply on trails that are designated and maintained for motorized use.

B. No person shall operate motor vehicles or snowmobiles on forest lands within the boundaries of an area that is posted and designated as closed to the operation of motor vehicles or snowmobiles.

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C. No person shall operate a motor vehicle or snowmobile in the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest, except on forest roads that are not posted and designated as closed, and on forest trails or areas that are posted and designated to allow the use of motor vehicles or snowmobiles. The exception under item D does not apply.

D. Except as provided in item C, on forest lands classified as managed or limited, a person may use an ATV off forest trails in a manner consistent with this subpart when lawfully:

- (1) engaged in hunting big game or constructing hunting stands during October, November, and December;
- (2) retrieving big game during September; or
- (3) trapping during open seasons.

E. No person shall construct an unauthorized permanent trail on forest lands.

F. Subpart 1 does not apply to motor vehicles used to carry out silvicultural activities, including timber cruising, and the harvest and transport of forest products for commercial purposes.

G. The commissioner may grant a variance from the requirements of subpart 1 to private landowners and leaseholders when the only reasonable access to their land is across state forest lands.

Subp. 8. Forest roads.

A. A motor vehicle on a forest road shall travel at a speed that is reasonable and prudent. It is a violation of this part to exceed a posted speed limit.

B. All posted parking and traffic regulations, including signs designating speed limits, stop signs, one-way traffic, and do not enter, shall be obeyed on a forest road.

C. No person, passenger, or operator of a motor vehicle shall travel on or along a forest road that is designated as closed with signs, barricaded, or blocked with a gate.

D. Removing snow from a forest road is prohibited when the road is posted for no snow removal.

E. No person shall operate, nor shall an owner permit the operation of a motor vehicle, on a forest road or trail in a manner that causes damage to the road, land, or other natural resources.

Minnesota Statutes 2005, Section 84.777

84.777 Off-highway vehicle use of state lands restricted.

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

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

HIST: 2003 c 128 art 1 s 21