

State Forest Trail and Management Revisions Project Description

Background. Between 2003 and 2008, the DNR classified all 58 state forests as limited, managed or closed with regard to motorized use. The DNR also inventoried over 12,000 miles of forest routes and designated 831 miles of all-terrain vehicle (ATV)/off-highway motorcycle (OHM) trail, 143 miles of single-track OHM trail, 27 miles of off-road vehicle (ORV) trail, and 2,300 miles of roads for OHV use. Over 3,000 miles were closed, and 827 miles were designated as non-motorized trails. On the inventoried routes that were not designated or closed, motor vehicle use is permitted in forests classified as managed and prohibited in forests classified as limited or closed. The process was limited to inventory, classification, and disposition of existing routes; new trails were not proposed.

The DNR has started a review of the forest trail systems to identify new trail routes and connections, areas for special management, and to close trails that have proven unsustainable. The trail system changes will not include changing forest-wide limited, managed, or closed motorized classifications.

Scope. The DNR will consider designating new trails and trail connections for all types of use, both motorized and non-motorized. The trails may be designated for one or more uses. The DNR expects some trails will be closed (undesignated), or that the designated uses for the trails may change. The DNR may designate some trails funded annually through the grant-in-aid program as DNR forest trails.

The review will not include forest-wide changes in classification, other state forest recreation facilities like campgrounds or day-use areas, or state corridor trails specifically authorized in statute.

The DNR will also consider designating areas for special management. For example, state law (Minn. Stat. Sec. 84.926) provides specific hunting and trapping-related exceptions to the normal prohibition on off-trail ATV use in limited forests. The DNR may designate areas where these exceptions no longer apply and off-trail ATV will not be allowed.

Process Details. State forests will be reviewed either individually or in geographically-related groups. The public will be invited to an initial scoping meeting to review preliminary DNR suggestions and submit their own ideas and recommendations. A draft proposal will be developed following the scoping meeting.

A notice in the State Register, and in legal newspapers that serve the counties in which the forest is located, will announce the availability of the draft proposal. As required by statute, at least 60 days after the State Register notice, the DNR will hold a public meeting to receive comments. The DNR will consider all comments received, revise the proposal, and complete any required environmental

review. New trail designations, trail closures, and special management area designations will be established by written order published in the State Register.

Process Objectives

- Designate a sustainable system of forest roads and trails that provide for diverse motorized and non-motorized public recreation and access.
- Close unsustainable routes to vehicular travel.
- Create designated or “de facto” non-motorized via route closures or special management areas.
- Designated trails and trail systems that provide a ‘quality’ recreational experience, and provide connections to other recreation facilities, support services and other popular destinations.
- Forest roads and trails that provide adequate access for both recreational and utilitarian purposes (*e.g., hunting, trapping, angling, fuelwood and bough collecting, berry and mushroom picking, etc.*)
- Management options not available/used during the early process will be implemented:
 - Hunter/walking trails designated
 - Areas with limitations on hunting exceptions designated
 - New trails designated to provide improved state forest access and trail connections
- Trail systems will be designated in forests classified “managed”
- The public will be engaged in recommending and reviewing changes to forest trail systems and management.

Current Status. The DNR will develop a schedule for revisiting all state forest trail systems. Currently, four forests in Pine County (Chengwatana, General Andrews, Nemadji, St. Croix) are under review.

To Learn More. More information on this process and the 2003-2008 classification and designation effort is available on the DNR website at mndnr.gov, or contact Rebecca Wooden @ 651/259-5584 or Toll Free 1-888-MINNDNR (646-6367) with questions.