

Huntersville & Lyons State Forests Trail Revisions Project

Why is the DNR revising the trails?

In 2007, the DNR completed a forest classification and road/trail designation for DNR Forestry lands in Wadena County. During this planning effort, the DNR classified these lands as “limited” for recreational motor vehicle use, meaning off-highway vehicles may use all forest roads and trails signed as open for their use. The DNR designated over 60 miles of roads, over 55 miles of motorized trail and almost 18 miles non-motorized trail during this process. Since it has been over 10 years the DNR is reviewing the trails to see what is working and what can be improved.

What lands are included in this project?

DNR Forestry lands in Wadena County are included in this project. This includes Huntersville State Forest (Approx. 17,000 acres state-managed), Lyons State Forest (Approx. 6,700 acres state-managed) and scattered parcels of state-owned land (approx. 2,300 acres).

What is/is not included in this project?

This project reviewed trail designations in the area, both motorized and non-motorized. Other facilities within the forests including day use areas and campgrounds are not included. Changing the forest classification from limited is also not included in this project.

What changes are proposed?

The DNR proposes to designate approximately 4.3 miles of new horse trails within Huntersville State Forest. These horse trails will connect to existing trails within the forest and provide new opportunities for horse users. The DNR also proposed to designate approximately 15.2 miles of new motorized trails within Huntersville State Forest. These new trails will provide connections to existing trails and facilities as well as new experiences for motorized trail enthusiasts. Finally, the DNR proposes to undesignate approximately 5.1 miles of motorized trails within Huntersville and Lyons State Forests. The undesignated trails are currently seldom used and some pose wetland issues. The DNR does not propose any changes to scattered state parcels in Wadena County. The table below identifies the change in trail miles.

Trail Use Type	Huntersville-Current	Huntersville-Proposed	Lyons-Current	Lyons-Proposed
ATV/OHM	3.6 miles	4.5 miles	2.2 miles	0 miles
OHM-only	58 miles	69 miles	0 miles	0 miles
Horseback	18 miles	22 miles	0 miles	0 miles

What are the benefits of designating trail?

Designation ensures the trail will receive funding for maintenance, signage and mapping. In a limited forest, such as Huntersville and Lyons, a motorized designation allows the trail to be open for motorized use.

Where will the money for trail construction and maintenance come from?

The designated OHV trails will be funded through the dedicated OHV accounts. Money in these accounts comes OHC registration fees and a portion of the unrefunded state gas tax attributed to the on-trail use of OHVs. The DNR may also work with local clubs who may be interested to add the new trails to the Grant in Aid Program. The Grant in Aid Program is a cost-share program between the DNR, a local government unit and a club to provide maintenance on OHV trails. Horse trails will be funded through the horse pass program.

What are the next steps?

Once the public review process is complete, the DNR will review all comments received and incorporate them into the final proposal. The final proposal will be submitted to the Environmental Review Unit within the DNR to determine if an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) is required. If an EAW is required, that will be completed prior to final designation by the Commissioner of Natural Resources. Trail construction and signage will be completed after final designation.

How has the public been involved?

The DNR began this process in October, 2017 with a 30-day public scoping period. This included an information/listening session in Menahga. The intent was to get ideas for potential trail revisions in the project area. The DNR received 212 comments during this period. These comments were reviewed and incorporated into the trail revisions proposal. The public is invited to review and comment on the proposal during the 60-day public review period (currently occurring). Once the 60-day public review period is complete, the DNR will review comments received and make modifications based on the comments before submitting the final proposal for designation.

What about the environment?

Trails will be developed based on standards found in the DNR's Trail Planning, Design and Development Guidelines manual as well as the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Counsel's Great Trails manual. Use of these manuals helps guide trail designers to develop trails that are environmentally sustainable. Trails will be routed to avoid sensitive environmental areas wherever possible.

The trail proposals have been reviewed by a DNR interdisciplinary team for conflicts with current management activities, natural resource concerns as and other concerns. If an EAW is required, the document will further review any environmental impacts the potential trails may have. In addition, potential trails will be checked against the Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) data for potential conflicts with state listed threatened and endangered species, field checks where necessary and, if necessary, formal environmental review.

Additional questions/comments?

For additional information, please contact Joe Unger, OHV Planner, Parks and Trails Division, MN Department of Natural Resources at 651-259-5279 or joe.unger@state.mn.us or Tim Williamson, Acquisition and Development Specialist, Parks and Trails Division, MN Department of Natural Resources at 218-308-2369 or timothy.williamson@state.mn.us.

Comments may be submitted to: Joe Unger, Parks and Trails Division, 500 Lafayette Rd, St. Paul, MN 55155. Or email to foresttrailplanning.dnr@state.mn.us.