

On Track

A Monthly Update on Forest Road & Trail Designation in Minnesota State Forests

Planning Progress

Vol. 1, Issue 4

April 2007

Beltrami Island

- Commissioner Holsten signed the Commissioner's Order to classify the forest as managed and to designate forest roads and trails on March 13.

Chippewa Group

- Proposed classifications:
 - Managed: Big Fork & Blackduck state forests; scattered lands in Beltrami and Itasca counties
 - Limited: Bowstring, Buena Vista & Remer state forests; scattered lands in Cass County
 - Closed: Battleground & Welsh Lake state forests
- Next steps: Preparing final plan, maps and Commissioner's Orders for state forest lands.
- The US Forest Service will release a draft environmental assessment on designation of roads for OHV use in April.

Cloquet Valley (St. Louis)

- Public review to begin April 2007.
- Proposed classification: Managed.
- Next steps: Issue notice of public review period and announce public meeting date(s).

Crow Wing/Emily (Crow Wing)

- Public notice that draft plan and map are available for public review expected in April.
- Informational presentation on forest classification and road/trail designation to Crow Wing County Board of Commissioners on March 27.

DNR finalizes plan for Beltrami Island State Forest

The extended, and at times controversial forest classification and road/trail designation project for the Beltrami Island State Forest has been completed. The DNR's initial proposal to classify the forest and designate roads and trails open to motor vehicle use was released in November 2004. Based on public comments and 2005 legislation that allowed retention of the managed motor vehicle use classification on forest lands north of US Highway 2, the DNR revised the proposal. The DNR worked with staff from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, County Board representatives from Beltrami, Lake of the Woods, and Roseau counties, and the Red Lake Band of Chippewa from November 2005 to January 2007 on the revised classification and designation plan. The revised plan was released for public comment in February 2007.

DNR Commissioner Mark Holsten signed orders classifying the forest as managed and designating forest roads and trails on March 13th. DNR staff will be working to sign designated forest roads and trails, prepare updated user maps, and provide information regarding the recreational opportunities and new guidelines for use of forest roads, trails, and access routes in the Beltrami Island State Forest. The effective date for the classification and road/trail designations will be December 31, 2007.



Commissioner Holsten, left, at the Beltrami Island Commissioner's Order signing with DNR staff, Mary Broten, Dennis Cameron, and Jack Olson.

Direction for OHV Trail Designation & Forest Classification Review for 2007-'08

Planning is "On-Track"

Eighteen forests have now been completed with signed Commissioner's Orders for forest classification and road/trail designation. Another 24 forests are at various stages in the planning process. Unsustainable roads and trails are being closed to motor vehicle use, while suitable routes remain open for designated forest access and riding opportunities.

Improved maps and informational materials are available on the department's redesigned OHV web pages. A more consistent, understandable and enforceable system of OHV trails and riding opportunities is gradually taking shape. This enables trail users to make informed choices regarding appropriate trail use. Visit the DNR OHV riding web page at:
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/ohv/index.html>

The planning process too, has been modified in order to expedite planning, while making the process more accessible to constituents. Public involvement now occurs earlier in the process, leading to more informed decisions and better planning outcomes. This improvement was noted by third-party independent auditors in the FSC/SFI Fall 2006 Surveillance Audit reports. Like Forest Certification and SFRMP, forest access planning remains a very high department priority.

Cook and Lake County Plans Out for Public Comments

The DNR is seeking public comments on its forest classification and motor vehicle route designations for both Cook and Lake Counties. Cook County will have a public review meeting on May 22, 2007 in Grand Marais, with the review period ending on May 31, 2007. Lake County will have a public review meeting on June 12, 2007 in Silver Bay, with the review period ending on June 22, 2007.

What's the word?

Proactive Closure

A route that has been closed to all motorized use, including recreational OHV use and use under the big game hunting and trapping exceptions in M.S. 84.926, subd. 4. These routes are closed under both the limited and managed forest classifications.

The justification for closure is that the route cannot sustain motorized use. Continued use would cause rutting or other damage to route or adjacent natural resources. Sign and/or gates, or barricades are required to indicate this closure.

DNR teams are recommending proactive closures during the statewide classification review and road/trail designation process where warranted. Depending upon the existing condition, temporary closures may be instituted until final closure is required under the final plan.

Planning Progress (cont.)

Paul Bunyan/Hubbard County

- Plans are now complete and will be implemented in the field before December 31, 2007.
- Plans and maps are available to download at:
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/ohv/designation/status.html>

Sturgeon River (St. Louis)

- Public review to begin April 2007.
- Proposed classification: Managed.
- Next steps: Issue notice of public review period and announce public meeting date(s).

Superior Group (Cook County)

- Public review in-progress.
- Proposed classification: Pat Bayle State Forest – Limited; Grand Portage State Forest – Managed.
- Next Steps: Public review meeting scheduled for May 22, 2007 in Grand Marais. Public review period ends May 31, 2007.

Superior Group (Lake County)

- Public review in-progress.
- Proposed classifications for Finland State Forest and scattered lands coincide with other owners – USFS (Limited); Lake County (Managed).
- Next steps: Public review meeting scheduled for June 12, 2007 in Silver Bay. Public review period ends June 22, 2007.

West Central Group

- Public review documentation under development.
- Proposed classifications: Limited for Huntersville, Lyons, Mississippi Headwaters, Smoky Hill, Two Inlets, White Earth.
- Public review anticipated to begin in April.
- Public meetings likely in July.

The East Central, Northern Border, Superior-St. Louis planning efforts to begin spring 2007; Koochiching, George Washington and Golden Anniversary to begin summer 2007.

For more information, visit the DNR OHV riding web page at
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/ohv/index.html>



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