

On Track

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

Planning Progress

Beltrami Island

- Drafts of revised proposals and maps will be available soon on the DNR Web site for final public review.
- Proposed classification: Managed
- Next steps: Team will evaluate public comments, make revisions and forward for final Commissioner's approval.

Chippewa Group

- Comment period closed Nov. 3; team is reviewing public comments.
- Proposed classifications:
 - o Managed: Big Fork & Blackduck state forests; scattered lands in Beltrami and Itasca counties
 - o Limited: Bowstring, Buena Vista & Remer state forests; scattered lands in Cass County
 - o Closed: Battleground & Welsh Lake state forests
- Next steps: Team will present comment summary to Commissioner and revise proposals as needed.

Cloquet Valley (St. Louis)

- Team is finalizing proposals for public review.
- Proposed classification: Managed
- Next steps: Team proposals are being reviewed internally in preparation for public review.

Crow Wing/Emily (Crow Wing)

- Team is scheduling review of proposals with county.
- Proposed classifications:
 - o Crow Wing State Forest: Limited
 - o Emily State Forest: Limited
 - o Scattered lands in Crow Wing County: Limited, with several isolated parcels closed
- Next steps: Team anticipates finalizing proposals in Jan. 2007; Public review will follow.

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Creating Non-Motorized Areas

Keith Simar, Division of Forestry

Minnesota statutes were amended in the 2005 Legislative session to allow the DNR Commissioner to designate areas within state forests that are not subject to the big game hunting and retrieval exceptions or the furbearer and minnow trapping exceptions (MS 84.926, Subd. 2 and 4). Field teams recommend non-motorized areas to protect unique natural resource values or to balance existing or future user opportunities.

When determining whether to recommend a non-motorized area, DNR staff must consider some important factors:

- 1) **Enforceability.** These areas should be designed to be enforceable, taking advantage of natural barriers (e.g., lakes) to create clearly defined perimeters and accessible enforcement.
- 2) **Enhanced experience.** Generally, staff should choose a few larger, rather than several smaller, areas to enhance the non-motorized experience.
- 3) **Ownership.** Where multiple ownerships are involved, all parties should agree to the classification, which would only apply to state land within the defined boundary.
- 4) **Other protections.** Non-motorized areas should seek to provide additional protections to user or resource values, but should not be used only to designate already-protected resources, such as wetlands.
- 5) **Resource management.** These areas are not intended to be wilderness areas. Motorized natural resource management activities such as prescribed burning, timber harvest, construction of water impoundments, or tree planting are allowed.

70-Mile Trail Update

Jean Goad, NE Information Officer

In 2003, the Legislature directed the DNR to develop a 70-mile ATV trail on county and state forest lands. The DNR requested proposals from counties, received several, and selected a proposal in Becker County, which later decided not to move forward with its proposal. The DNR is now reconsidering proposals that were submitted by Lake of the Woods-Roseau, Aitkin-Cass, St. Louis, and Itasca counties. The DNR is finalizing the selection process and expects to decide on a proposal this winter so that project design (trail alignment and environmental review) can be completed by early summer. Critical to this selection will be a clear plan for public involvement.

January Planning Calendar

8	Commissioner reviews public comments for Chippewa Group
17	Public meeting for Hubbard County non-motorized proposal

DNR to Launch Five Planning Efforts in 2007

Erika Rivers, NW Information Officer

The DNR will launch its final five planning efforts for the forest access planning process in 2007. The first of the new efforts will likely begin in February, when the East Central and Northern Border teams kick off. The East Central group includes the Hill River, Savanna, Waukenabo, Land o' Lakes, Snake River and DAR state forests and scattered Forestry parcels in Pine, Carlton, Aitkin, Kanabec and southern Cass counties. The Northern Border group includes the Red Lake, Lake of the Woods, NW Angle and Lost River state forests and scattered Forestry parcels in Lake of the Woods, Roseau and northern Beltrami counties. DNR Regional Management Teams are currently selecting staff from across DNR work units to serve on the planning teams. In mid-summer, planning efforts will kick off for the Koochiching group of forests (Smokey Bear, Koochiching and Pine Island state forests and scattered lands in Koochiching County), the George Washington group (George Washington and Golden Anniversary state forests and scattered lands in eastern Itasca County) and the R.J. Doerer Memorial Hardwood Forest and scattered lands in southern Minnesota.

GIS Extension Documents Team Decisions

Rick Jaskowiak, Division of Trails & Waterways

Planning teams are now able to efficiently document road, trail and route recommendations with a GIS extension tool. For each segment of inventoried route on state forest lands, planning teams use a set of criteria to evaluate whether to designate the route for specific kinds of motorized or non-motorized use. Criteria evaluated and recorded in the GIS extension include wetlands and resource sensitivity; existing uses; species of special concern; and slope, soils and landforms. Planning teams can use these electronic decision records as they move through the planning process to respond to public comments and internal reviews of their recommendations.

What's the Word?

All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV)

Class 1: A motorized flotation-tired vehicle with three to six tires that has an engine displacement of less than 800 cubic centimeters and total dry weight less than 900 pounds.

Class 2: A motorized flotation-tired vehicle with three to six tires that has an engine displacement of less than 800 cubic centimeters and total dry weight of 900 to 1,500 pounds.

Class 2 ATVs can legally travel on State Forest Roads, on ATV trails specifically signed to allow Class 2 ATV use, on the shoulder or extreme right side of county roads and state trunk highways and on the right side of township roads and city streets, if not prohibited by the road authority or other local laws.

The Minnesota Legislature has directed the DNR to regulate motor vehicle use on Forestry lands under one of three classification frameworks: 1) **Closed**—Forest roads are open to highway-licensed motor vehicles, and OHVs are not permitted, except on frozen public waters; 2) **Limited**—where motor vehicle use is permitted on forest roads and those trails specifically designated for certain types of motorized uses; or 3) **Managed**—where motor vehicle use is permitted on all forest roads and trails unless posted closed.

For more information, visit the DNR OHV riding web page at

www.dnr.state.mn.us/ohv/index.html



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Planning Progress (cont.)

Paul Bunyan/Hubbard County

- Team has drafted a non-motorized access proposal.
- Public meetings are scheduled for Jan. 17 at Park Rapids Area High School, 401 Huntsinger Ave.

Rum River (Mille Lacs)

- The Commissioner is reviewing final plans. Commissioners Orders are forthcoming.
- Implementation scheduled to begin this spring.

Sturgeon River (St. Louis)

- Team is scheduling review of proposals with St. Louis County.
- Proposed classification: Managed
- Next steps: Initiation of public comment period and announcement of public meetings forthcoming.

Superior Group (Cook County)

- Public comment period and meeting dates will be announced soon; proposals and maps will be published online at that time.
- Team anticipates proposal will be ready for public review early in 2007.

Superior Group (Lake County)

Planning Team proposal should be available for public review in early 2007.

West Central Group

- Planning team is scheduling meetings with partnering counties to review early recommendations.
- Next steps: Once consensus is reached with counties on classification and route designation proposals, the DNR planner will create written proposals and maps for internal DNR review.