

On Track

A monthly update on forest road and trail designation in Minnesota state forests

Planning Progress

Chippewa Group

- Commissioner's Orders being drafted

Cloquet Valley (St. Louis)

- Awaiting final approval

Crow Wing/Emily (Crow Wing County)

- Revising forest classification decision

East Central

- Inventory maps available on line
- Public open houses complete
- Classification and route evaluation underway

Koochiching/Itasca

- Public open houses complete
- Planning team developing classification and route designation proposal

Northern Border

- Forest classification proposals being reviewed
- Planning team working on route designation proposal

Southern Minnesota Unit

- Team kickoff complete
- Open houses were March 5 – 6
- Route evaluation underway

Sturgeon River (St. Louis County)

- Awaiting final approval

Superior Group (North St. Louis County)

- Route designation complete
- Public review to begin April 2008

West Central Group

- Planning for the North Unit underway; WESF draft plan release in winter 2008
- Mississippi Headwaters Unit complete
- South Unit complete

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Southern Minnesota forest access effort begins

The Southern Minnesota Forest Access Road and Trail designation effort began with DNR hosting open houses on March 5 in Rochester and March 6 in Elk River. Horseback riders and dirt bikers were out in force, along with conservationists, hunters, mountain bikers, ATVers, 4X4ers, and hikers.

The DNR team will now begin its designation work, starting with the Zumbro Bottoms forest unit, a popular trail destination which supports a wide variety of activities, especially horseback riding.

The planning unit includes 20 counties – Benton, Dakota, Fillmore, Goodhue, Hennepin, Houston, Kandiyohi, LeSueur, Martin, Meeker, Morrison, Nicollet, Olmsted, Rice, Sibley, Sherburne, Stearns, Wabasha, Winona, and Yellow Medicine; three state forests – Richard J. Dorer, Sand Dunes, and Birch Lake; and scattered state lands outside the state forest boundaries.

The team will review forest classifications – currently *limited* for the Dorer and *closed* to off-highway vehicles in Sand Dunes and Birch Lake.

The DNR completed an off-highway vehicle system plan for the Dorer in 2002. That plan will be the starting point for road and trail designations.

The team hopes to complete a preliminary road and trail proposal by early summer. The DNR will then seek broad public review through a formal participation process before any final decisions are made.

Mississippi Headwaters plan complete

The Mississippi Headwaters Unit plan is done. The planning team considered about 130 miles of roads and trails. The plan establishes motor vehicle access on almost 9,000 acres of state land and 19,000 acres of county-managed forest in Beltrami, Clearwater, and Hubbard.

The plan recommends a *limited* classification, which means motor vehicle operation on DNR forest lands will be restricted to forest roads and trails that are posted open.

The plan designates almost 15,000 acres of land along the Mississippi River as an *Area with Limitations*, where the hunting and trapping exemptions for ATV use do not apply. The plan designates about 3.8 miles of hunter walking trails. (It does not include a proposed ATV/OHM trail crossing of the Mississippi River at Coffee Pot Landing.)

Signed routes include 23.6 miles of forest roads and 5.5 miles of motor and non-motor trails. Another 104 miles of routes will be unsigned and available for motor vehicle use depending on ownership of the lands and where they are located. Recommendations are available at:

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/ohv/designation/status.html>

For more information, visit the DNR OHV riding web page at www.mndnr.gov

click on outdoor activities, then OHV riding or www.findthetrails.com



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