

On Track

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

Planning Progress

Chippewa Group

- Commissioner's Orders being drafted

Cloquet Valley (South St. Louis/Carlton)

- Public review ended June 29
- Analysis of comments underway
- Final plan expected November 2007

Crow Wing/Emily (Crow Wing)

- Awaiting final approval

East Central

- Inventory maps available on line
- Public open houses held between August 21 and 29.
- Fall 2007 classification and route evaluation process underway

Koochiching/East Itasca

- First public open houses expected in December

Northern Border

- Draft inventory maps available
- Initial meeting with cooperators was held October 24

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Mississippi Headwaters draft plan to be released in November

Planning for the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest will take a big step this month with the release of the draft plan detailing the proposed forest classification and road and trail designations.

As the name implies, the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest includes the upper reach of the Mississippi River as it leaves Itasca State Park and flows to Lake Bemidji. The forest's statutory boundary encompasses 45,290 acres. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Forestry administers 8,790 acres of this total acreage. The forest covers parts of three counties: Beltrami (13,231 acres), Clearwater (1,672 acres), and Hubbard (4,217 acres). The balance of 17,380 acres are in private ownership

The DNR team has been working closely with the Land Departments for Beltrami, Clearwater, and Hubbard counties to develop recommendations for both DNR and county-administered lands for this forest. The remaining DNR Forestry scattered lands located in southwest Beltrami County will also be included.

The public meeting will be held in Bemidji in mid-January.

State forest classification plans completed for Cook and Lake Counties

On October 30, DNR Commissioner Mark Holsten approved Forest Classification and Trail Designation Plans for state forest lands in Cook and Lake counties. These plans have come together over the past two years with the help of federal, tribal and county cooperators. The plans will usher in a new set of vehicular use regulations both inside and outside of state forests in those counties.

In Cook County, over 200 miles of inventoried routes were evaluated on more than 100,000 acres of state forest land. Under the final plan, the Pat Bayle State Forest, and all forest lands outside of it's boundaries, will be reclassified as limited effective September 1, 2008, making all routes closed unless posted open to vehicle use. State lands within the managed Grand Portage State Forest will remain open unless posted closed, except for the 1,500 acre Jackson Lake site in the east-central portion of the forest which will be limited. More than 45 miles of motor and non-motor trails were also designated as part of this plan.

In Lake County, the plan covers over 220 miles of roads, trails and other inventoried routes located on over 160,000 acres of state forest lands. Effective September 1, 2008, portions of the Finland State Forest located within the boundaries of the Superior National Forest will be reclassified as limited. Lands located outside the federal forest boundary nearer the North Shore will remain managed, as are Lake County's forest lands. About 25 miles of trail were designated as part of the plan.

DNR to begin planning in Southern Minnesota

Planning will begin soon for the balance of forest lands in southern Minnesota. This includes the Richard J. Dorer State Forest and scattered DNR Forestry lands in some two dozen counties. The planning unit has about 360 miles of routes on approximately 59,000 acres of land. DNR Central Region Planner Emmett Mullin has been assigned to the project. The planning team will be named soon.

What's the word?

Areas with limitation

Deer hunters in Paul Bunyan State Forest, Beltrami Island State Forest, and Rum River State Forest may encounter new signs that designate Areas of Limitation. These areas are part of multi-user forest management that is a product of the off-highway vehicle (OHV) planning and forest classification process.

Areas of Limitation are primarily for the purposes of protecting unique natural resource values and attempting to provide a balance of user opportunities. They designate areas with off-highway vehicle limitations. In Areas of Limitation within state forests, the big game hunter/trapper exceptions do not apply.

Forest lands classified as managed or limited are afforded off-road vehicle and ATV exception for:

- Hunting big game or transporting or installing hunting stands during October, November, and December when in possession of a valid big game hunting license;
- Retrieving big game in September, when in possession of a valid big game hunting license
- Tending traps during an open trapping season for protected furbearers, when in possession of a valid trapping license.

Areas with limitations do not have this general exception.

Signs for Areas with Limitations will typically read: "*No Motorized Vehicles Permitted Beyond this Point*" and/or "*Foot Travel Welcome. Closed to all public motor vehicle use.*"

Hunters also need to know the local regulations for the state forest and wildlife management areas they are hunting. All are encouraged to refer to pages 26-28, 105-106, and 113-123 in the regulations handbook for detailed information. Hunters should also check the DNR Web site at www.findthetrails.com for lists of roads and trails that may have been closed due to recent rains or flooding.

Planning Progress (cont.)

Sturgeon River (St. Louis County)

- Public review ended July 20
- Analysis of comments underway
- Draft proposal expected January 2008

Superior Group (Cook County)

- Public review ended May 31
- Analysis of comments underway
- Final plan approved October 30, 2007

Superior Group (Lake County)

- Public review ended June 22
- Analysis of comments underway
- Final plan approved October 30, 2007

Superior Group (North St. Louis County)

- Open houses held in June
- Classification/designation exercise underway
- Draft proposal expected January 2008

West Central Group

- Planning for the North Unit underway; MHSF draft plan released in November; WESF draft plan release in winter '08
- Analysis of comments underway for South Unit
- South Unit final classification review and designation expected fall 2007

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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