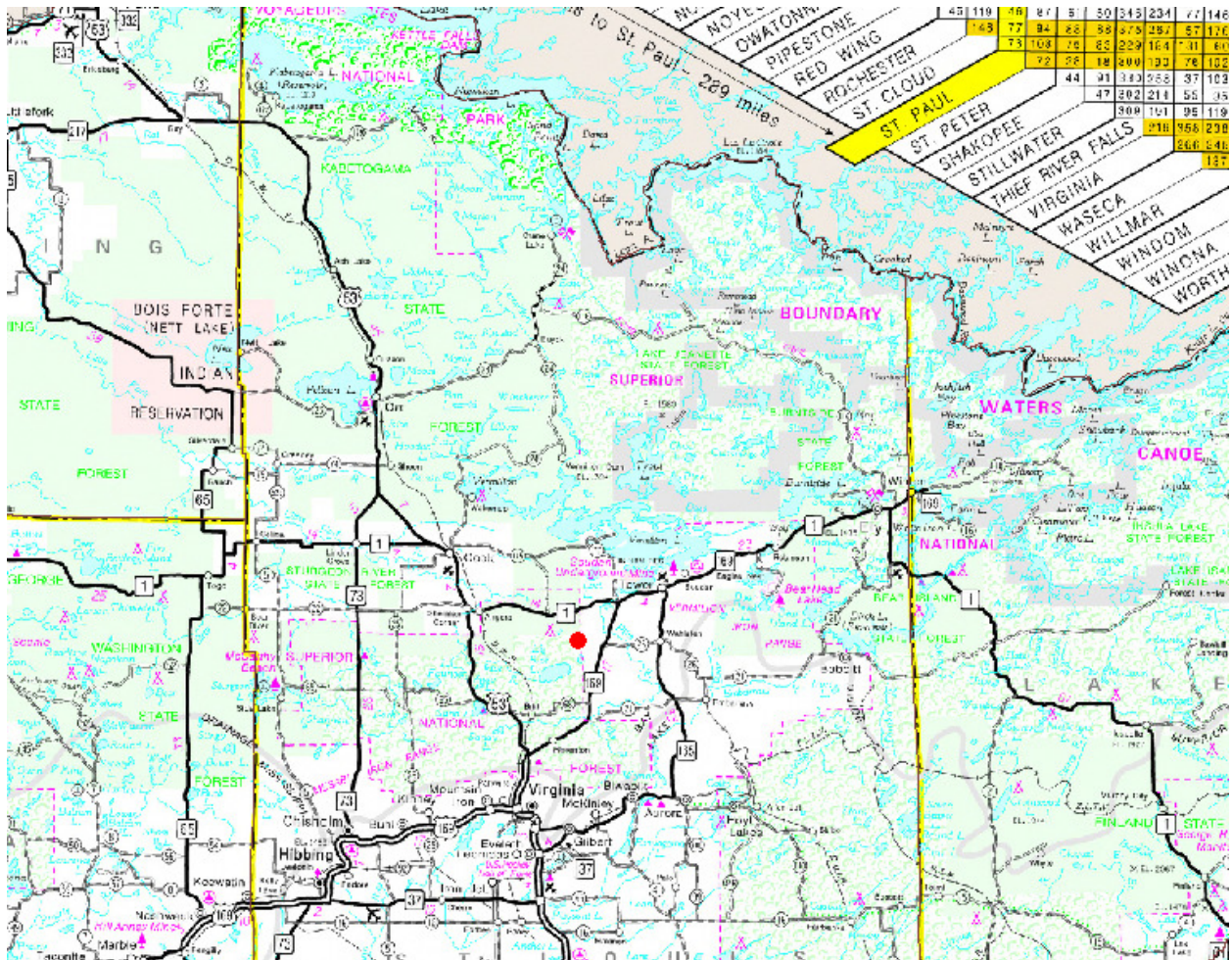


Forest Classification & Road / Trail Designation Plan for DNR Forestry-Administered Lands in Northern St. Louis County

Final Plan
October 21, 2008



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

North St. Louis County Planning Team

Jim Rupert, Chair DNR, Division of Forestry
Steve Hennessy..... DNR Division of Trails & Waterways
Jeffrey Koehn / Kathy Larson.....DNR Division of Enforcement
Bob Leibfried.....DNR Division of Ecological Resources
Dave Olfelt DNR, Division of Fish & Wildlife (Wildlife)
Tom Engel, GIS Support.....DNR, Division of Fish & Wildlife
Craig Perrault, GIS Support NE Region MIS Coordinator

Brian McCann, Planner.....DNR, Trails & Waterways

Cooperators:

St. Louis Co. Land Department (Northern District)
U.S.F.S., Superior National Forest - LaCroix, Kawishiwi & Laurentian Ranger Districts
Forest Capital Partners
Potlatch Land Management Staff



© 2008, State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is available to all individuals regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, age, sexual orientation, or disability. Discrimination inquiries should be sent to MN DNR, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4031; or the Equal Opportunity Office, Department of the Interior, Washington, DC 20240.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Purpose.....	4
Lands Covered by this Plan.....	4
Motor Vehicle Use Classification.....	5
<i>Limitations on Off-Trail and Non-Designated Trail Use.....</i>	<i>6</i>
Road & Trail Designations.....	6
<i>State Forest Roads.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Recreational Trails.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>State Trail Designations.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Non-Designated Routes.....</i>	<i>8</i>

Forest Classification / Route Designation Plan

Introduction.....	10
<i>Process.....</i>	<i>10</i>
Description of Lands Covered by the Plan.....	10
Natural Resource Assessment.....	11
<i>Landforms and Topography.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Soils.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Native Plant Communities.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Rare Species / Natural Heritage Data</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Surface Waters.....</i>	<i>12</i>
Recreational Assessment.....	12
Forest Access Route Inventory.....	13
Motor Vehicle Use Classification.....	13
Forest Land Classification Criteria.....	13
Forest Land Classifications.....	16
Areas with Motor Vehicle Use Limitations.....	17
Forest Road & Trail Designations.....	17
<i>State Forest Roads.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Recreational Trails.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>State Trail Designations.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Non-Designated Routes.....</i>	<i>20</i>
Plan Review & Public Comment	20
Plan Adoption & Implementation	20
<i>Road Signing Projects.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Plan Effective Date.....</i>	<i>20</i>

Appendices

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

Minnesota Laws 2003, Chap. 128, Article 1, Sect. 167 (as amended) requires the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to review the classification of all state forests, and other state forest lands under the authority of the Commissioner by December 31, 2008. The DNR is to evaluate the forest classification, according to the process set forth in *MN Rules Part. 6100.1950, Subp2* and retain or modify the current classification as appropriate.

In addition to making classification recommendations, this draft plan also identifies those forest roads and trails that the DNR proposes to (un)designate for various motorized and non-motorized purposes within the planning area. Consistent with legislative policy direction (*MS Ch. 84.777*), the future use of off-highway vehicles and motor vehicles (e.g., ATVs, OHMs, ORVs, HLVs) in this area will henceforth be in accordance with the direction outlined in the final version of this plan, as adopted and implemented by the Commissioner.

Lands Covered by this Plan

This Planning Unit contains roughly the northern half of St. Louis County, and includes the Bear Island, Burntside, Kabetogama and Lake Jeanette State Forests. It excludes the Sturgeon River and Cloquet Valley State Forests which were addressed separately. The Planning Unit is bounded by the U.S. / Canadian International Boundary on the north; the St. Louis County line on the east and west; and by T55N R19-21W, T56N R17-18W (full townships), T56N R12-16W (Sections 1-24 only) on the south. Scattered DNR forestry-administered lands located outside of statutory forest boundaries, but within the Planning Unit, are also addressed in this plan.

Land Ownership. This forest classification and road / trail designation plan covers all of the DNR forestry-administered lands located within approximately the northern half of St. Louis County, including state forest lands within the statutory boundaries of the Bear Island, Burntside, Kabetogama and Lake Jeanette State Forests. Statutory state forest boundaries encompass 863,439 acres; about 464,792 acres of which (or 54%) are DNR forestry administered lands. There are 549.8 miles of inventoried routes located within the boundaries of these four named state forests. See Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of State Forest Land Ownership: Northern St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Feb. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

State Forest Lands Northern St. Louis County	Statutory Acres (Acres)	DNR-Admin Acres (Acres)	Inventoried Route Miles (Miles)
Bear Island State Forest	157,815	18,605	96.6
Burntside State Forest	74,815	26,220	7.3
Kabetogama State Forest	619,287	159,845	445.2
Lake Jeanette State Forest	11,522	1,384	0.7
<u>Outside</u> State Forest Boundaries	NA	258,855	286.2
Totals	863,439	464,792	836.0

Scattered Lands. Scattered forestry-administered tracts of land outside the statutory boundaries of these state forests totaling 258,855 acres are also addressed in this plan. These parcels vary in size and contain about 286.2 miles of inventoried access routes.

Under state law, county-administered forest lands located within state forest boundaries will be classified as are adjacent state forest lands with regard to motor vehicle use; unless the county adopts a formal resolution or ordinance that specifies a different management approach for these lands. (*M.S. 84.777, Subd 1*)

Motor Vehicle Use Classification

‘Managed’ - This plan calls for state lands located outside of the proclamation boundaries of the Superior National Forest to retain their current classification as ‘*managed*’, and lands inside the forest to be reclassified as ‘*limited*’, as per motor vehicle use. The Kabetogama State Forest, however, will retain its ‘*managed*’ classification, in its entirety, including a 118,500 acre section of the forest that lies inside National Forest boundaries. About 12,000 acres (or 10%) of this so called ‘*Kabetogama Triangle*’ are state-owned forest lands.

‘Limited’ – Under this plan, all other state lands inside Superior National Forest boundaries will be classified as ‘*limited*’ consistent with USFS’ travel management policy. In addition, one site nearly 4,000 acres in size (2,504 ac state land) located inside of the Kabetogama State Forest will be reclassified as ‘*limited*’ to preserve its history of non-motorized recreational use.

‘Closed’ – Seven sites totaling 12,339 gross acres (5,834 acres state land) will be classified as ‘*closed*’ to motor vehicle use (below) due various environmental factors (*e.g., wetlands, saturated organic or clay soils*) and/or because of a history of non-motor recreational use. State lands located within the federal BWCAW, already closed to motor use, will also be officially classified as ‘*closed*’ under this plan.

Table 2. State Forest Land Classification: Northern St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Jan. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Proposed State Land Classification (as per motor vehicle use)	Inside State Forest (acres)	Outside State Forest (acres)	Totals (acres)
‘Managed’	153,059	142,824	307,736 (66%)
‘Limited’	19,880	91,868	99,991 (22%)
‘Closed’ (incl. State lands in BWCAW)	24,415	32,746	57,065 (12%)
Totals	197,354	267,438	464,792

This judgment is based upon the department’s application of the eight criteria in *MR 6100.1950, Subp. 1-4* which guide the classification of state forest lands for motor vehicle use. Public comments also helped shape the final forest classification recommendations. Final forest classifications are summarized in **Table 2** and shown on associated planning maps which are incorporated by reference into this plan.

Limitations on Motor Vehicle Operation [Table 3]

Upon the plan's effective date, all state and county lands within the following eight areas will be reclassified (as either '*limited*' or '*closed*') with regard to motor vehicle use. All but the Ash River West site will be reclassified as '*closed*'; and all but the McNiven Site are located within the Kabetogama State Forest. All of the sites are remote, and they share a history of non-motorized recreational use, mostly by walking hunters. Many already contain developed non-motor trails and support facilities (*e.g., gated trails, vehicle access and parking*).

The sites, described below, and depicted on planning maps, include a mix of state, county, private (industrial and non-industrial) lands, and National Forest System lands. Motor vehicle use restrictions will apply only to state and county forest lands within these sites. The total of all eight sites is 16,283 gross acres, or 8,338 acres of state forest land (only).

Table 3. Areas with Motor Vehicle Use Limitations: No. St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Oct. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Areas with Motor Vehicle Restrictions/Classification	Total Size (Acres)	DNR Acres (Acres)	Inventoried Routes (Miles)
Kabetogama State Forest			
Site 1, Ash River East / ' <i>Closed</i> '	69	69	1.0
Site 2, Ash River West / ' <i>Limited</i> '	3,944	2,504	8.4
Site 3, Black Bay Trails / ' <i>Closed</i> '	1,054	370	0.0
Site 4, Echo Lake / ' <i>Closed</i> '	1,798	979	4.0
Site 5, Elephant Lake / ' <i>Closed</i> '	3,587	2,385	3.1
Site 6, Gheen Hill / ' <i>Closed</i> '	630	630	6.7
Site 7, Willow Valley / ' <i>Closed</i> '	1,460	1,401	9.2
Outside State Forest Boundaries			
Site 8, McNiven / ' <i>Closed</i> '	3,741	954	4.4
Totals	16,2839	8,338	36.8

Forest Road & Trail Designations [Table 4]

The planning team evaluated all inventoried routes, applied screening criteria, and made recommendations as regards final disposition (*e.g., permanent closure, designation as roads or trails, leave 'non-designated'*.) For pre-existing roads and trails, the presumption was that the current designation would be maintained, unless there was a compelling reason to propose a change. Under the '*managed*' classification, all routes not designated as forest roads or recreational trails remain open to vehicular use, subject to state land prohibitions on rutting, erosion and damage to crops or living vegetation. Under the '*limited*' scenario, these same routes are closed to most vehicle use, except for that pursuant to *MS Ch. 84.926* (hunter/trapper exception).

State Forest Road Designations

System Forest Roads (SFRs) are the major roads in the forest that provide forest management access, recreational access, and links to state, county, or township public roads. System roads are used on a daily or weekly basis, and are graveled and maintained to allow travel by highway-licensed vehicles. System roads are typically open to all motor vehicles, including OHVs, but may be gated seasonally or closed temporarily to

address specific road conditions or resource concerns (e.g., wildfire threat). State Forest Roads are intended to serve state forest management and protection needs, and are not, by definition, public roads.

Under this plan, 37.0 miles of DNR System Forest Roads will be designated, including 1.9 miles on scattered state-owned forest lands located outside of state forest boundaries in No. St. Louis County.

Minimum Maintenance Roads (MMRs) are forest management access roads used on an intermittent basis. Recreational users may use them, but they are not promoted or maintained for recreational use. MMRs will be graded and graveled as necessary for forest management purposes, but may not always be usable by low-clearance vehicles. MMRs are signed and may be gated and/or closed during certain times of the year.

Under this plan, 150.0 miles of Minimum Maintenance Roads will be designated, including 41.5 miles on scattered state-owned forest lands located outside of state forest boundaries in No. St. Louis County.

Table 4. Route Designations: State and County Lands, North St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Oct. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Route Designations (No. St. Louis County)	State Land Designations (miles)		St. Louis County Designations (miles)	
Total Inventoried Routes	828.0	829.2	537.5	537.8
System Forest Road	37.0		69.2	
Min. Maintenance Forest Road	146.6		150.0	
Non-designated Routes	572.6		320.3	
Proactive closures	34.8	570.9	45.5	17.3
In closed forests	0.0		0.3	
In limited forests	71.8	63.4	32.8	20.5
In managed forests (access routes)	466.0	472.7	271.7	281.5
ATV & OHM Trail	4.4		9.2	
ORV Trails	0.0		0.0	
Dual-Designated MMR/OHV	4.4		3.5	
Gated / Seasonally Closed	30.5		3.0	
Non-Motor Trails	35.8		31.6	

RED indicates changes to the draft proposal resulting from agency and public review.

Recreational Trail Designations

Non-Motorized Trails. This draft plan calls for the designation of a total of 31.6 miles of Hunter Walking Trails on state lands, including 10.7 miles outside state forest boundaries. St. Louis Co. will designate an additional 6.7 miles of Hunter Walking Trails in the Planning Unit. Most of these routes have a long history of non-motorized recreational use. Non-motorized visitors may also use forest roads, trails, and non-designated routes throughout the forest, unless these routes are posted closed.

OHV Trails. The plan recommends a total of 9.2 miles of shared ATV / OHM Trail, including 5.6 miles located on scattered state forest lands across the Planning Unit. St. Louis County will develop an additional 4.2 miles of ATV/OHM trail in the northern part of the county. Another 3.5 miles of dual-designated MMR/OHV Trail will also be designated on state lands outside of named state forests.

Snowmobile. There are no proposed changes to existing DNR Snowmobile Trails or to the current grant-in-aid snowmobile trail system within this Planning Unit.

State Trail Designations

Under this plan, four segments of existing State Trail are recommended for seasonal motor vehicle use. In all, 9 miles of State and 2 miles of County land segments have been designated through this process. These designations are reflected in Summary Tables and on Planning Maps. In addition, the USFS will also designate federal land segments for OHV travel.

Arrowhead Trail near Orr (ATV/OHM)

- 10 mi. of State Trail creates 47 mi. interconnected road/trail system.
- Located entirely on public land.

Arrowhead Trail near Ash Lake (ATV/OHM)

- 5 mi. of State Trail creates 13+ mi. interconnected road/trail system.
- Inclusion of portion on private lands will need to be addressed separately.

Taconite Trail from the Big Aspen ATV Trail system west to the Sturgeon River State Forest boundary (MMR/OHV)

- Dual designation as both MMR and OHV Trail west of Highway 53. ATV only designation east of Highway 53.
- This 19 mi. segment of State Trail connects to the 20 mi. Big Aspen Trail System.
- Inclusion of portions on private lands will need to be addressed separately.

Taconite Trail near Tower / Soudan (MMR/OHV)

- Dual designation as both MMR and OHV Trail.
- 1.3 miles of DNR-owned RR Grade well-suited to OHV travel.

Public use of private/corporate segments will need to be addressed separately, leaving potential interim gaps in these proposed vehicle routes. A State Trail Master Plan Amendment may be required in order to effect some of these planned changes.

Non-Designated Routes

Proactive Route Closures Some 34.8 miles of routes, judged '*unsustainable*', on state lands are proposed for permanent closure. This includes 11.5 miles of routes on scattered state lands outside of state forest. St. Louis County will close an additional 17.3 miles of problem routes to vehicular use. These routes will typically be gated, signed, bermed and/or revegetated.

Non-designated Routes. This plan leaves a total of 63.4 miles of '*non-designated*' routes on state lands classified as '*limited*'. Non-designated routes will be closed to summer season vehicular use, but are available pursuant to the seasonal hunter/trapper exceptions of *MS Chapter 84.926*. These routes will not be maintained for recreational use, but may be used infrequently for natural resource management access. Over time the routes may become blocked by deadfalls or revegetate naturally, thereby obliterating the corridor.

Under this plan, a total of 472.7 miles of non-designated routes remain in '*managed*' forests. Termed '*forest access routes*', these routes are open to vehicle use subject to prohibitions on rutting, erosion and damage to vegetation. They are also subject to temporary closure. Vehicle operators must exercise good judgment when riding such routes to avoid causing damage. About 151 miles of this occur on scattered state lands outside state forests. About 281 miles of access routes will remain on St. Louis Co. managed lands.

Gated Forest Access Routes. About 30 miles of '*forest access routes*' located mostly in the Kabetogama State Forest, will be seasonally gated to protect the routes and adjacent resources from wet conditions and spring '*frost-out*'. Area Managers also wish to limit motor use during the Sept./Oct. Grouse season, but allow for OHV use later during the firearms deer season. These routes are shown on Planning Maps and are discussed in Appendix C.

Introduction

Off-highway vehicles include All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), Off-Highway Motorcycles (OHMs), and Off-Road Vehicles (ORVs), such as Jeeps and four-wheel drive trucks, but not snowmobiles or Highway Licensed Vehicles (HLVs). This plan identifies forest roads and trails that the the DNR has designated for various motorized and non-motorized purposes on state-administered lands in North St. Louis County.

Legislation enacted in 2003, amended in 2005 and 2007, requires the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to re-evaluate current forest classifications, with regard to motor vehicle use, and to modify these as appropriate. Future use of HLVs and OHVs on state forest lands in North St. Louis County will be according to policy direction outlined in the final version of this DNR plan.

Process

In May 2007, an interdisciplinary team was formed to complete the following tasks:

1. Compile an inventory of existing access routes on state and county-administered forest lands within the Planning Unit. Check this data for accuracy and completeness. Supplement as appropriate.
2. Evaluate the existing motor vehicle use classification for state forest lands within the unit, as per the criteria prescribed in *MR 6100.1950, Subp. 2*. Recommend changes to current land classification(s).
3. Evaluate existing inventoried access routes using the Rapid Environmental Assessment Checklist. Determine appropriate route disposition (e.g., closure, designation, non-designated).
4. Present the team's recommended forest classification and road/trail use designations and for public review and comment. Incorporate public comment into a final plan for adoption and implementation..

Description of Lands Covered by the Plan

This Planning Unit contains roughly the northern half of St. Louis County, and includes the Bear Island, Burntside, Kabetogama and Lake Jeanette State Forests. It excludes the Sturgeon River and Cloquet Valley State Forests which were addressed separately in a concurrent planning process. The Planning Unit is bounded by the U.S. / Canadian International Boundary on the north; the St. Louis County line on the east and west; and by T55N R19-21W, T56N R17-18W (full townships), T56N R12-16W (Sections 1-24 only) on the south. Scattered DNR forestry-administered lands located outside of statutory forest boundaries, but within the Planning Unit, are also addressed in this plan.

Land Ownership. This forest classification and road / trail designation plan covers all of the DNR forestry-administered lands located within approximately the northern half of St. Louis County, including state forest lands within the statutory boundaries of the Bear Island, Burntside, Kabetogama and Lake Jeanette State Forests. Statutory state forest boundaries encompass 863,439 acres; about 464,792 acres of which (or 54%) are DNR forestry administered lands. There are 549.8 miles of inventoried routes located within the boundaries of these four named state forests. See Table 4.

Scattered Lands. Scattered forestry-administered tracts of land outside the statutory boundaries of theses state forests totaling 258,855 acres are also addressed in this plan. These parcels vary in size and contain about 286.2 miles of inventoried access routes.

Under state law, county-administered forest lands located within state forest boundaries will be classified as are adjacent state forest lands with regard to motor vehicle use; unless the county adopts a formal resolution or ordinance that specifies a different management approach for these lands. (*M.S. 84.777, Subd 1*)

This plan does not address private lands located within the forest. Nor does it address lands located within public road rights-of-way.

Table 5. Summary of State Forest Land Ownership: Northern St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Feb. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

State Forest Lands Northern St. Louis County	Statutory Acres (Acres)	DNR-Admin Acres (Acres)	Inventoried Route Miles (Miles)
Bear Island State Forest	157,815	18,605	96.6
Burntside State Forest	74,815	26,220	7.3
Kabetogama State Forest	619,287	159,845	445.2
Lake Jeanette State Forest	11,522	1,384	0.7
<u>Outside</u> State Forest Boundaries	NA	258,855	286.2
Totals	863,439	464,792	836.0

Natural Resources Assessment

Landforms and Topography

The Ecological Classification System (ECS) helps describe, map and manage maps ecosystems at various scales using climatic, geologic, topographic, hydrologic, soils and vegetation data. The four state forests and state land outside state forests included in this plan fall within parts of seven ECS subsections: Border Lakes, Laurentian Uplands, Nashwauk Uplands, Little Fork-Vermilion Uplands, Toimi Uplands, Tamarack Lowlands, and St. Louis Moraines.

The majority of trail segments fall within the Border Lakes Subsection. This subsection is characterized by a great number of lakes and watercourses. The topography is largely rolling hills and most of the subsection is forested. Forest communities represented are jack, white, and red pine and hardwood-conifer mix. The Laurentian Uplands subsection is dominated by rolling hills running southwest to northeast and is a headwaters area for major rivers in the Lake Superior watershed. Extensive logging in this subsection has resulted in Quaking aspen as the dominant tree species.

Bear Island State Forest is located in both the Border Lakes and Nashwauk Uplands subsections. The Nashwauk Uplands subsection contains the Mesabi Iron Range and the forests are largely white and red pin, balsam fir, white, spruce, and aspen-birch. Large-scale landscape modifications are common due to mining with mine pits and stockpiles prevalent throughout.

The Little Fork-Vermilion Uplands subsection is level to gently rolling throughout with many meandering rivers and streams. Quaking Aspen dominates the upland forests while the many wetlands contain sedge fen, black spruce, white cedar, and black ash. The eastern part of the planning area contains the Toimi Uplands subsection. This subsection is heavily forested and consists mainly of drumlin fields, rolling hills that run from southwest to northeast. Aspen-birch forests dominate what had been a largely pine forest prior to logging. The Tamarack Lowlands is dominated by wetland vegetation. Only a small portion of the planning area is represented by the St. Louis Moraines is characterized by rolling hills with steep slopes throughout. A mixture of swamps, bogs, and mature pine are scattered across this subsection but quaking aspen is the prevalent tree species.

Soils. Upland soils include well-drained sand, loam, sandy loam, clay loam and till. Rocks and small boulders are a common component of upland soils, especially in the North Shore Highlands and Toimi Uplands subsections. Wetland soils are typically poorly-drained peat. Ground water levels vary with

topography and distance to surface water. Ground water is often very near the surface. Perched subsurface water tables are also quite common.

Native Plant Communities. Upland mesic forest communities include aspen-birch-fir-white spruce, white, red and jack pine, northern hardwoods (e.g., sugar maple, basswood, red oak, paper birch, yellow birch.), with some upland white cedar. Wet-mesic forest communities commonly occur between mesic uplands and wetlands, and in gentle depressions on upland flats. These forest communities often have a mixed canopy containing aspen, birch, spruce, black ash, red maple, fir, and basswood.

Wetland communities are both forested and non-forested. They include cedar swamp, black ash swamp, black spruce swamp, tamarack swamp, black spruce bog, open bog, poor fen, rich fen, alder swamp, wet meadow/carr, and cattail marsh. Beaver-influenced wetlands are a common feature along smaller flowages.

Rare Species / Natural Heritage Data. Rare species and natural communities are widely distributed throughout the planning area. These include high quality native plant communities, as well as rare and threatened individual species such as the wood turtle, Laurentian tiger beetle, and lake sturgeon and many others. This is a wild and beautiful area of the state that, despite years of logging and use has retained many of its natural features. The St. Louis River Corridor, for example, is home to an important population of wood turtles. This critical habitat area and turtle population merit regular monitoring to ensure survival.

Surface Waters. Numerous streams and flowages occur within the Planning Unit, including many designated trout streams and their tributaries. Major flowages include the Vermilion River, Pike River, Basswood River, Littlefork and Embarras Rivers. All of the streams and rivers within the forest have substantial undeveloped shoreline and minimally developed local watersheds. Numerous medium and small-sized lakes and small, wetland interior “bog lakes” dot the forest.

Larger lakes within the Planning Unit include Burntside Lake, Lake Vermilion, Ash Lake, Blackduck Lake, Sturgeon and Big Rice Lakes, Bear Head Lake, the Kabetogama Reservoir and Pelican Lake. Thousands of smaller lakes, rivers and flowages also dot the landscape, including those located within the federal Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) and Voyageurs National Park.

Recreational Assessment

Hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, canoeing, skiing, ATV riding and snowmobiling are the most popular outdoor recreational activities. Developed recreational facilities within the No. St. Louis County Planning Unit include: Woodenfrog Campground, Ash River Campground, Wakemup Bay Campground, and the Hinsdale Island Campsites; 173 Public Water Accesses; portions of the Vermilion River, Littlefork River, and St. Louis River Canoe & Boating Routes; Soudan Underground Mine State Park and Bear Head Lake State Park; the Iron Range OHV Recreation Area; six Wildlife Management Areas totaling over 800 acres; five Scientific and Natural Areas totaling over 1,100 acres; 25 miles of grant-in-aid OHV trails; 560 miles of grant-in-aid snowmobile trails; and over 100 Km of grant-in-aid ski trails. About 100 miles of the Arrowhead State (Snowmobile) Trail and 90 miles of the Taconite State (Snowmobile) Trail also occur within the Planning Unit. In addition, the USFS and St. Louis County maintain campgrounds, trails, and public water access sites within the Unit. Voyageurs National Park is located along the northern boundary of the Planning Unit.

St. Louis County is home to 5 State Parks (9,839 acres), 8 SNAs (1,264 acres), and 16 WMAs (6,606 acres). About 325,234 acres of the 1,096,187 acre federal BWCAW are also located in St. Louis County. The BWCAW includes 31,284 acres of DNR forest lands in St. Louis County, including all or portions of the Burntside, Bear Island, Kabetogama and Lake Jeanette State Forests. State lands within the BWCAW are closed to motor vehicle use.

The 539,067 acres of US Forest Service administered lands outside the BWCAW in St. Louis County do provide a number of miles of roads and trails currently open to OHV use. The Superior National Forest is currently developing a comprehensive Travel Management Plan for vehicular use of National Forest System Lands. Cross-country OHV travel on State and Federal lands is generally prohibited, except on state lands pursuant to *MS Chapt. 84.926* (seasonal hunting trapping exceptions). USFS does not permit ATV use in conjunction with big-game hunting and retrieval on National Forest System lands.

Forest Access Route Inventory

2003 Statewide Forest Access Inventory. The 2003-04' forest access route inventory was intended to capture and accurately depict all routes showing evidence of ongoing human use, with a particular focus on motorized vehicle use. This route inventory shows a total of 1,365.5 miles of existing routes on a mix of state and county forest lands within the Planning Unit. This includes about 282 miles of routes on scattered state lands, and 537 miles on county forest lands, mostly inside state forests. The majority, or 546 miles of routes, are located inside the Burntside, Bear Island, Kabetogama and Lake Jeanette State Forests

Data Sources. Existing road and trail maps were overlaid with various other data layers (e.g., wetlands, rare natural features data, topographic and soils data, recreation facilities, county & federal data, etc.) to provide a context for evaluation. Field crews then field checked and collected new data on any missing or unmapped routes showing evidence of ongoing human use. Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment was used to record route locations and other corridor attributes (e.g., width, condition class, apparent use, water and wetland crossings, etc). Aerial photo interpretation was used to supplement field data collection.

The planning team employed an Arc View GIS application to assist in the real-time analysis and storage of spatial data. Resulting maps are available from the DNR and are incorporated into this plan by reference. *[Note that original data totals were refined throughout this process by adding missing segments, deleting non-state segments, and correcting actual route alignments. Data totals have changed as a result.]*

Motor Vehicle Use Classification

The DNR classifies State Forest lands as ‘*managed*’, ‘*limited*’, or ‘*closed*’ with respect to motor vehicle use (*MR 6100.1950*). These classifications are generally characterized as follows:

Managed Forest Lands. Forest roads, trails and access routes are open to OHV use unless posted closed. These forest lands are characterized by a low intensity of use, a mix of motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities, dispersed recreational use, and little competition among visitors for recreational use of the land. Signing and enforcement restrict motor vehicle use in sensitive resource areas and on non-motorized trails.

Limited Forest Lands. Forest roads are open to motor vehicles use unless posted closed. Forest trails and access routes are closed to motor vehicle use, except where designated and signed to permit specific motorized uses. These forests are characterized by moderate to high levels of recreational use. It is necessary to designate motorized trails so that vehicle use occurs only in suitable and sustainable locations.

Closed Forest Lands. Forest roads are open to motor vehicles licensed for highway use. No OHVs are permitted, except that OHVs may operate on frozen public waters (e.g., across lakes for ice fishing). These lands are characterized by high susceptibility to damage by OHV use, or have an administrative or statutory history that precludes motorized use (e.g., State Forest lands within the federal BWCAW) .

Forest Land Classification Criteria (*MN Rules, Part 6100.1950, Subp. 2*)

A. Resource Sensitivity and Management Objectives

Management objectives for Minnesota state forests include timber production, resource protection and wildlife habitat improvement, along with providing a mix of outdoor recreation opportunities. Subsection Forest Resource Management Plans for this area identify specific long-term goals calling for greater biological diversity, improved forest spatial patterns, and quality forest recreation.

Sensitive natural features within the Planning Unit include major wetlands, large, unfragmented bogs, old growth timber stands, and a variety of rare plant and animal communities. Many high-quality native plant communities, and areas of biodiversity significance, have also been mapped and identified.

Popular recreational activities include hunting, trapping, hiking, snowmobiling, OHV riding and wildlife observation. Other visitors engage in utilitarian pursuits such as minnow or leech trapping, bough harvesting, mushroom and berry collecting, fuelwood harvest, etc. As overall visitor numbers increase, so does the need to more actively manage recreational facilities and regulate user behavior. In order to maintain quality recreational experiences, it has become increasingly necessary to separate incompatible uses (notably motorized and non-motorized activities) and to clearly specify use conditions and limitations.

Consistency in public land management rules and regulations is critical. The state's '*managed*' classification mirrors that of the St. Louis County Land Department. Standable and enforceable. Conversely, the '*limited*' classification most closely parallels the USFS' travel management policy for National Forest System Lands. To the extent possible, the department sought to ensure consistency across mixed blocks of public land in order to foster consistency of regulation across public forest lands.

St. Louis County also administers a number of recreational cabin leases within the boundaries of the Planning Unit. This plan assures continued year-round vehicular access to these cabin lease sites, while protecting public lands and waters. Both objectives can be met under a '*managed*' forest scenario, or by issuing Special Use Permits to private property owners in areas where (general) public access will be restricted.

B. Resource Impact by Motorized and Non-Motorized Use

All recreational trails, both motorized and non-motorized, can impact natural resources during their construction, maintenance and use. Impacts vary by type of use, use season, soil type, slope and drainage, trail design and other factors. Trail users commonly trample vegetation and compact soils along naturally-surfaced trail treadways, and can introduce non-native plant seeds and spores into uninfested areas. Soil compaction, rutting (resulting in root mass disturbance and reduced forest productivity), and soil displacement are often more pronounced along and adjacent to vehicular trails, requiring regular maintenance of trail surfaces and trail drainage structures.

Trail users can also impact wildlife populations, both directly and indirectly. Some wildlife may avoid habitat near trails, while improved hunter access may increase hunting pressure leading to reduced wildlife population levels. Trail routes, many originally developed for timber extraction, may fragment habitat types or be generally unsuited to continued trail use. The type and extent of impacts on wildlife vary widely by activity, by species and by season. Actual effects may be localized and difficult to quantify.

The planning team concluded that most of the existing inventoried routes in the Planning Unit could sustain continued vehicular use. Those that cannot will be closed or designated for non-motorized use only. The DNR believes that future resource impacts can be avoided, minimized and substantially reduced from current levels given planned route closures, non-motor trail designations, and an active program of trail monitoring, maintenance and field enforcement.

C. Motorized and Non-Motorized Recreational Opportunity in Area

Opportunities for public recreation, both motorized and non-motorized, abound on the mix of federal, state and county forest lands located across northern St. Louis County. The Superior National Forest's Big Aspen ATV Trails near Britt, and the DNR's Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area near Gilbert are both located here, and the popular Moose Walk / Moose Run ATV Trail is located just east in Lake County. The Taconite and Arrowhead State Trails are major snowmobile corridors, and serve both motorized and non-motorized forest visitors. Grant-in-aid snowmobile routes criss-cross the county, connecting popular destinations, as do the many hunter walking and hiking trails.

Continued access, for this mix of outdoor recreational activities, was a key factor in the DNR's decision to retain the '*managed*' classification for the majority of state lands (about 64%) located within this Planning Unit. Areas with a history of non-motorized use, with environmentally sensitive features or unstable soils, were reclassified as either '*limited*' or '*closed*' to motor vehicle use.

D. User Needs (e.g., Trails, Parking, Signs, and Access)

There will be little change in existing roads, trails or parking areas as a result of this plan. Some additional signage will be required at parking and staging areas, along state forest roads, and coincident with the perimeter of areas with proposed motor vehicle use limitations. New signs (and maps) will inform users of vehicular use limitations and regulations. Snowmobiles and non-motorized trail users will be largely unaffected by forest classification changes or new route restrictions. Motorized forest visitors, on the other hand, will be directly impacted by route closures, and forest classification changes that restrict OHV and HLV use.

E. Degree and Trend of Motor Vehicle Use in the Area

Off-highway Vehicle use has increased in recent years, even though there are relatively few designated OHV trails in Northern St. Louis County. ATVs are the most commonly used OHV in the forest. The majority of the use is utilitarian in nature, mostly by local hunters (those living in or near the forest) who enter the forest from public roads, private lands or recreational cabin lease sites. Many also access the forest seasonally via HLV in association with hunting, trapping, and collecting activities. Traffic levels are generally very light and sustainable in most cases. Little damage or evidence of abuse has been reported.

Traffic levels should not be significantly affected by forest reclassification or by the designation of existing routes. Utilitarian use will continue as before. Those who currently use vehicles on forest roads, designated trails, and even non-designated access routes may continue to do so under a '*managed*' classification, except where such routes are posted '*closed*'. Off-trail OHV use, except for that pursuant to *MS 84.926* (big game hunting or furbearer trapping), is illegal and will also remain so under this plan.

F. Degree and Trend of Non-Motor Use in the Area

Trails used by hikers, bikers, cross-country skiers and horseback riders are located throughout the planning area. Demand for non-motorized trails is expected to continue at roughly current levels. Non-motorized forest users may continue to use any inventoried forest access route, except those posted as '*closed*' to all public use. Eight areas encompassing 16,283 acres will be reclassified as '*limited*' or '*closed*' under this plan, thereby eliminating all summer-season recreational OHV riding. St. Louis County lands located within these walking hunter areas will be similarly restricted.

In addition, over 38 miles of Hunter Walking Trail designations are contained in this plan on a mix of state and county forest lands across the planning unit. The intent is to provide a remote non-motorized hunting experience for those who prefer a quieter, less mechanized hunting opportunity.

G. Competing Interests among Different User Groups

There exists a broad diversity of values and expectations related to use of public lands. Conflicts can and do occur. Given the limited size and irregular pattern of state land ownership, it is impossible to completely separate motorized and non-motorized forest users. It is equally clear that there is no public land allocation strategy that will satisfy all interests. Every effort was made to reduce existing problems and avoid future conflict through forest classification and route designation decisions.. The pursuit of recreational balance was, in large part, the impetus for reclassifying over 16,000 acres (of state and county lands) to restrict motor vehicle use, for adding 38.3 miles of non-motorized recreational trails across the Planning Unit.

H. Public Safety and Law Enforcement Concerns

This plan is an important first step towards attaining ‘managed use of managed trails’. It implements a series of actions, all intended to better control motorized access and use within the forest. By concentrating motorized use on fewer, more sustainable routes, and by establishing consistent vehicle use restrictions across state, federal and county forests, the DNR believes that resource protection and public safety can be improved over current conditions. Active trail monitoring and stepped-up field enforcement will help to ensure that trail conditions do not erode with time, and that user compliance remains at acceptable levels. North St. Louis County forests will be added to the DNR’s list of ‘focus forests’ for monitoring and enforcement purposes upon this plan’s published effective date.

Forest Land Classification – No. St. Louis County.

‘Managed’ - This plan calls for most state lands located outside of the proclamation boundaries of the Superior National Forest to retain their current classification as ‘*managed*’, as per motor vehicle use. It further recommends that the Kabetogama State Forest retain its ‘*managed*’ classification, in its entirety, including a 118,500 acre section of the forest that lies inside National Forest boundaries. About 12,000 acres of this so called ‘*Kabetogama Triangle*’ (or 10%) are state-owned forest lands. In total, about 64% of state lands in the No. St. Louis Co.Planning Unit will be classified as ‘*managed*’ under this plan.

‘Limited’ – Under this plan, all other state lands inside Superior National Forest boundaries will be classified as ‘*limited*’ consistent with USFS’ travel management policy. In addition, one site nearly 4,000 acres in size (2,504 ac state land) located inside of the Kabetogama State Forest is proposed to be reclassified as ‘*limited*’ due to its history of non-motorized recreational use. In total, about 24% of state lands in the North St. Louis County Planning Unit will be classified as ‘*limited*’ under this plan.

‘Closed’ – Seven sites totaling 12,339 gross acres (5,834 acres state land) are proposed to be ‘*closed*’ to motor vehicle use (below) due various environmental factors (*e.g., wetlands, saturated organic or clay soils*) and/or due to a history of non-motor recreational use. About 12% of this Planning Unit, including state lands located within the federal BWCAW, will be classified as ‘*closed*’ under this proposal.

Table 6. State Forest Land Classification: Northern St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Oct. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Proposed State Land Classification (as per motor vehicle use)	Inside State Forest (acres)	Outside State Forest (acres)	Totals (acres)
‘Managed’	164,912	142,824	307,736 (64%)
‘Limited’	8,123	91,868	99,991 (24%)
‘Closed’ (incl. State lands in BWCAW)	24,319	32,746	57,065 (12%)
Totals	197,354	267,438	464,792

This judgment is based upon the DNR’s analysis of the eight criteria contained in *MR 6100.1950, Subp. 1-4* which guide the classification of state forest lands for motor vehicle use. Comments submitted at a series of three Public Open Houses in June 2007 have also helped shape the department’s reclassification decisions.

Areas with Motor Vehicle Use Limitations [Table 7]

Upon this plan's effective date, all state and county lands within eight parcels totaling 16,283 gross acres (8,338 ac of state lands) will be reclassified as either '*limited*' or '*closed*' with regard to motor vehicle use. These parcels, which are summarized in **Table 7** and described in **Appendix C**, are also depicted on planning maps. They include a mix of state, county, private (industrial and non-industrial) lands, and National Forest System lands. Motor vehicle use restrictions will apply only to state and county forest lands within these sites. Vehicle use within each of these areas is more restrictive than that permitted in the surrounding forest.

All but the Ash River West site will be reclassified as '*closed*'; and all but the McNiven Site are located within the statutory boundaries of the Kabetogama State Forest. All of the sites are remote, and all share a history of non-motorized recreational use, mostly by walking hunters. Many already contain developed non-motor trails and support facilities (e.g., gated vehicle access and parking). See Appendix C for more information about these special areas.

Table 7. Areas with Motor Vehicle Use Limitations: No. St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Feb. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Areas with Motor Vehicle Restrictions/Classification	Total Size (Acres)	DNR Acres (Acres)	Inventoried Routes (Miles)
Kabetogama State Forest			
Site 1, Ash River East / 'Closed'	69	69	1.0
Site 2, Ash River West / 'Limited'	3,944	2,504	8.4
Site 3, Black Bay Trails / 'Closed'	1,054	370	0.0
Site 4, Echo Lake / 'Closed'	1,798	979	4.0
Site 5, Elephant Lake / 'Closed'	3,587	2,385	3.1
Site 6, Gheen Hill / 'Closed'	630	630	6.7
Site 7, Willow Valley / 'Closed'	1,460	1,401	9.2
Outside State Forest Boundaries			
Site 8, McNiven / 'Closed'	3,741	954	4.4
Totals	16,2839	8,338	36.8

Forest Road & Trail Designations [Table 8]

The planning team evaluated all inventoried forest access routes and recommended that it either be designated as a road or trail, be closed to future use, or that it remain 'non-designated'. For existing designated roads and trails, the presumption was that the current designation and uses would be maintained, unless there was a compelling reason to propose changes. Under the 'managed' classification, all routes not designated as forest roads or recreational trails will remain open to vehicular use, subject to state land prohibitions on rutting, erosion and damage to living vegetation.

State Forest Road Designations

The DNR divides State Forest Roads into two classes – System Forest Roads (SFRs) and Minimum Maintenance Roads (MMRs) based on their condition, intended use and planned maintenance level. State Forest Roads are generally open to use by both highway-licensed vehicles and off-highway vehicles (ATVs, OHMs, and ORVs). However, roads may be temporarily closed, at any time, to some or all vehicular use for public safety reasons or for natural resource protection purposes. Minimum maintenance roads are more

likely to be subjected to travel restrictions than are higher standard all-weather system forest roads. The USFS and St. Louis County also maintain a system of forest roads as necessary to provide public and management access to these publicly owned forest lands.

System Forest Roads (SFRs) are the major roads in the forest that provide forest management access, recreational access, and links to state, county, or township public roads. System roads are used on a daily or weekly basis, and are graveled and maintained to allow travel by highway-licensed vehicles. System roads are typically open to all motor vehicles, including OHVs, but may be gated seasonally or closed temporarily to address specific road conditions or resource concerns (e.g., wildfire threat). State Forest Roads are intended to serve state forest management and protection needs, and are not, by definition, public roads. Forest road designations are shown on planning maps and listed in **Table 8**.

This plan calls for the designation of 37.0 miles of DNR System Forest Roads, including 1.9 miles on scattered state-owned forest lands located outside of state forest boundaries in No. St. Louis County. St. Louis County also plans to designate 69.2 miles of higher-standard system forest road within the unit.

Table 8. Route Designations: State and County Lands, North St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Oct. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Route Designations (No. St. Louis County)	State Land Designations (miles)		St. Louis County Designations (miles)	
Total Inventoried Routes	828.0	829.2	537.5	537.8
System Forest Road	37.0		69.2	
Min. Maintenance Forest Road	146.6		150.0	
Non-designated Routes	572.6		320.3	
Proactive closures	34.8	570.9	45.5	17.3
In closed forests	0.0		0.3	319.6
In limited forests	71.8	63.4	32.8	20.5
In managed forests (access routes)	466.0	472.7	271.7	281.5
ATV & OHM Trail	4.1		9.2	
ORV Trails	0.0		0.0	
Dual-Designated MMR/OHV	4.4		3.5	
Gated / Seasonally Closed	30.5		3.0	
Non-Motor Trails	35.8		31.6	

RED indicates changes to the draft proposal resulting from agency and public review.

Minimum Maintenance Roads (MMRs) are forest management access roads used on an intermittent basis. Recreational users may use them, but they are not promoted or maintained for recreational use. MMRs will be graded and graveled as necessary for forest management purposes, but may not always be usable by low-clearance vehicles. MMRs are signed and may be gated and/or closed during certain times of the year.

This plan calls for the designation of 150.0 miles of Minimum Maintenance State Forest Roads, including 41.5 miles on scattered state-owned forest lands located outside of state forest boundaries. St. Louis County also plans to designate 135.1 miles of minimum maintenance forest roads. MMR designations are shown in **Table 8**.

Recreational Trail Designations

Non-Motorized Trails. This plan calls for the designation of a total of 31.6 miles of Hunter Walking Trails, including 10.7 miles on state lands outside state forest boundaries. St. Louis Co. will designate an additional 6.7 miles of Hunter Walking Trails in the Planning Unit. Most of these routes have a long history of non-motorized recreational use. Non-motorized forest visitors may also use forest roads, trails, and other non-designated routes throughout the forest (unless posted closed). Trail designations are shown in **Table 8**.

OHV Trails. The plan calls for a total of 12.7 total miles of OHV Trail, including 5.6 miles (of ATV/OHM Trail) located on state forest lands outside of state forests. St. Louis County will develop an additional 4.2 miles of ATV/OHM trail in the northern part of the county. No ORV (i.e., jeep or truck) trails or 'riding areas' are proposed on either state or county lands, although 3.5 miles of dual-designated MMR/OHV trail will include ORVs. Future grant-in-aid trail development opportunities are, however, certainly possible. The pending Missabe Mountain ORV trail proposal connecting Eveleth with Gilbert is but one such example within the planning unit..

Snowmobile. There are no proposed changes to existing DNR Snowmobile Trails or to the current grant-in-aid snowmobile trail system within this Planning Unit.

State Trail Designations

Under this plan, four segments of existing State Trail are recommended for seasonal motor vehicle use. In all, 9 miles of State and 2 miles of County land segments have been designated through this process. These designations are reflected in Summary Tables and on Planning Maps. In addition, the USFS will also designate federal land segments for OHV travel.

Arrowhead Trail near Orr (ATV/OHM)

- 10 mi. of State Trail creates 47 mi. interconnected road/trail system.
- Located entirely on public land.

Arrowhead Trail near Ash Lake (ATV/OHM)

- 5 mi. of State Trail creates 13+ mi. interconnected road/trail system.
- Inclusion of portion on private lands will need to be addressed separately.

Taconite Trail from the Big Aspen ATV Trail system west to the Sturgeon River State Forest boundary (MMR/OHV)

- Dual designation as both MMR and OHV Trail west of Highway 53. ATV only designation east of Highway 53.
- This 19 mi. segment of State Trail connects to the 20 mi. Big Aspen Trail System.
- Inclusion of portions on private lands will need to be addressed separately.

Taconite Trail near Tower / Soudan (MMR/OHV)

- Dual designation as both MMR and OHV Trail.
- 1.3 miles of DNR-owned RR Grade well-suited to OHV travel.

Public use of private/corporate segments will need to be addressed separately, leaving potential interim gaps in these proposed vehicle routes. A State Trail Master Plan Amendment may be required in order to effect some of these planned changes.

Non-Designated Routes

Proactive Route Closures Some 34.8 miles of routes, judged to be unsustainable, on state lands will be permanently closed to vehicle travel. This includes 11.5 miles of routes on scattered state lands outside of state forest. St. Louis County will close an additional 17.3 miles of problem routes to vehicular use. These routes will typically be gated, signed, bermed and/or revegetated.

Non-designated Routes. This plan leaves 63.4 miles of ‘*non-designated*’ routes on state lands classified as ‘*limited*’. Non-designated routes will be closed to summer season vehicular use, but are available pursuant to the seasonal hunter/trapper exceptions of *MS Chapter 84.926*. These routes will not be maintained for recreational use, but may be used infrequently for natural resource management access. Over time the routes may become blocked by deadfalls or revegetate naturally, thereby obliterating the corridor.

Under this plan, a total of 472.7 miles of non-designated routes in ‘*managed*’ forests, termed ‘*forest access routes*’, will remain on state lands. About 151 miles of this occur on scattered state lands outside state forests. These routes are open to vehicle use subject to prohibitions on rutting, erosion and damage to vegetation. They are also subject to temporary closure. Vehicle operators must exercise good judgment when riding such routes to avoid causing damage. About 281 miles of ‘*access routes*’ will remain on St. Louis Co. managed lands.

Forest Access Routes. Only those routes with visible damage were ‘*closed*’ to motor vehicle use. In addition, a number of miles of inventoried routes currently pegged as ‘*forest access routes*’ may also have potential long-term sustainability issues. These routes, which receive little traffic, but fulfill critical access needs, will be closely monitored. Some may require improvement in order to sustain vehicle use. Despite this special focus, some of the routes may eventually fall into disrepair and require permanent closure.

Gated Forest Access Routes. About 30 miles of ‘*forest access routes*’ located mostly in the Kabetogama State Forest will be seasonally gated to protect the routes and adjacent resources from wet conditions and spring ‘*frost-out*’. Area Managers also wish to limit motor use during the Sept./Oct. grouse hunting season, but allow for OHV use later during the firearms deer season. These routes are shown on Planning Maps and are discussed in Appendix C of this plan.

Final Plan Adoption & Implementation

A public notice of plan adoption will be published in the *State Register* and a statewide DNR news release issued announcing plan completion. All final plans, maps, public response and decision documents, and final Commissioner’s Orders will also be posted at www.mndnr.gov.

Road Signing Projects

After the Commissioner’s orders are published, but before their effective dates, the DNR will implement this plan by signing roads, trails, parking and staging areas, and major entry points to forest lands informing users of the forest classification and implications for motor vehicle use. Signs identifying designated forest roads, and explaining motor vehicle use regulations will also be conspicuously posted throughout the forest.

Plan Effective Date

The effective date for the forest classification and route designations contained in this plan is Sept. 1, 2009. This date is listed on the final signed Commissioner’s Orders as published in the *State Register*. Plan implementation (*e.g., signing, road and trail closures, route improvements*) should be substantially completed by this date.

NoStLPlan_Final.doc
21 Oct 2008

APPENDIX A

Minnesota Statutes & Rules Related to State Forest Classification & Off-Highway Vehicle Operations

MN Laws 2003, Chapt. 128, Article 1, Sect. 167, as amended by M.L. 2005, 1st Special Session, Chapt. 1, Article 2, Sect. 152, and by ML 2007, Ch. 57, Sec. 155.

Subdivision 1. Forest classification status review.

(a) By December 31, 2006, the commissioner of natural resources shall complete a review of the forest classification status of all state forests classified as managed or limited, all forest lands under the authority of the commissioner as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 89.001, subdivision 13, and lands managed by the commissioner under Minnesota Statutes, section 282.011. The review must be conducted on a forest-by-forest and area-by-area basis in accordance with the process and criteria under Minnesota Rules, part 6100.1950. Except as provided in paragraph (d), after each forest is reviewed, the commissioner must change the status of the lands within each forest to limited or closed. The commissioner may classify portions of a limited forest as closed. The commissioner must also provide a similar status for each of the other areas subject to review under this section after each individual review is completed.

(b) If the commissioner determines on January 1, 2005, that the review required under this section cannot be completed by December 31, 2006, the completion date for the review shall be extended to December 31, 2008. By January 15, 2005, the commissioner shall report to the chairs of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over natural resources policy and finance regarding the status of the process required by this section.

(c) Until December 31, 2010, the state forests and areas subject to review under this section are exempt from Minnesota Statutes, section 84.777, unless an individual forest or area has been classified as limited or closed.

(d) Notwithstanding the restrictions in paragraph (a), and Minnesota Statutes, section 84.777, subdivision 1, all forest lands under the authority of the commissioner as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 89.001, subdivision 13, and lands managed by the commissioner under Minnesota Statutes, section 282.011, that are north of U.S. Highway 2 shall maintain their present classification unless the commissioner reclassifies the lands under Minnesota Rules, part 6100.1950. The commissioner shall provide for seasonal trail closures when conditions warrant them. By December 31, 2008, the commissioner shall complete the review and designate trails on forest lands north of Highway 2 as provided in this section. History: 2003 c 128 art 1 s 21 (as amended)

Subdivision 2. Temporary Suspension of Environmental Review.

The requirements for environmental review under Minnesota Statutes, section 116D.04, and rules of the environmental quality board are temporarily suspended for each reclassification and trail designation made under subdivision 1 until the commissioner has met all requirements under subdivision 1, or December 31, 2008, if the commissioner has failed to complete those requirements as required by law.

Chapter 84.773, Minnesota Statutes 2006

84.773 RESTRICTIONS ON OPERATION.

Subdivision 1. Restrictions. A person may not intentionally operate an off-highway vehicle: (1) on a trail on public land that is designated or signed for nonmotorized use only; (2) on restricted areas within public lands that are posted or where gates or other clearly visible structures are placed to prevent unauthorized motorized vehicle access; (3) except as specifically authorized by law or rule adopted by the commissioner, in unfrozen public waters, as defined in section [103G.005](#); in a state park; in a scientific and natural area; or in a wildlife management area; or (4) in a calcareous fen, as identified by the commissioner.

Subd. 2. Wetland disturbance. A person may not operate an off-highway vehicle in a manner to:

- (1) indicate a willful, wanton, or reckless disregard for the safety of persons or property;
- (2) carelessly upset the natural and ecological balance of a wetland or public waters wetland; or
- (3) impact a wetland or public waters wetland in excess of the amounts authorized in section [103G.2241](#), [subdivision 9](#), unless: (i) sequencing of the impact is followed according to section [103G.222](#), [subdivision 1](#), paragraph (b), and the impact is repaired under section [103G.2242](#), and rules adopted pursuant to that section; or (ii) the activity is exempt under section [103G.2241](#).

Subd. 3. Private land access. The commissioner may grant up to a ten-year permit to exempt a private landowner or leaseholder from this section when the only reasonable access to a permit applicant's land is across state land. **History:** 2003 c 128 art 1 s 19; 2004 c 255 s 6

Chapter 84.777, Minnesota Statutes 2007

84.777 OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE USE OF STATE LANDS RESTRICTED.

Subd. 1. Designated trails. (a) Except as otherwise allowed by law or rules adopted by the commissioner, effective June 1, 2003, notwithstanding sections 84.787 to 84.805 and 84.92 to 84.929, the use of off-highway vehicles is prohibited on state land administered by the commissioner of natural resources, and on county-administered forest land within the boundaries of a state forest, except on roads and trails specifically designated and posted by the commissioner for use by off-highway vehicles. (b) Paragraph (a) does not apply to county-administered land within a state forest if the county board adopts a resolution that modifies restrictions on the use of off-highway vehicles on county-administered land within the forest.

Subd. 2. Off-highway vehicle seasons. (a) The commissioner shall prescribe seasons for off-highway vehicle use on state forest lands. Except for designated forest roads, a person must not operate an off-highway vehicle on state forest lands outside of the seasons prescribed under this paragraph. (b) The commissioner may designate and post winter trails on state forest lands for use by off-highway vehicles. (c) For the purposes of this subdivision, "state forest lands" means forest lands under the authority of the commissioner as defined in section 89.001, subdivision 13, and lands managed by the commissioner under section 282.011.

Subd. 3. Mapped trails. (a) Except as provided in sections 84.926 and 84.928, after completion of official department off-highway vehicle maps for the area, a person must not operate an off-highway vehicle on state land that is not mapped for the type of off-highway vehicle. This paragraph does not apply to state forest land north of U.S. Highway 2 until after June 30, 2009. (b) This subdivision does not apply to a forest access route in a managed forest north of U.S. Highway 2 that the commissioner has not designated as a road or trail. Forest access routes will not be signed or maintained and will not be included on published user maps of the forest. Off-highway vehicle operation on forest access routes is subject to the prohibitions on causing erosion, rutting, damage to trees or crops, and construction of unauthorized trails contained in Minnesota Rules. Damaged routes are subject to closure to off-highway vehicle use.

Subd. 4. Exemption from rulemaking. Determinations of the commissioner under this section may be by written order published in the State Register and are exempt from the rulemaking provisions of chapter 14. Section 14.386 does not apply. **History:** 2003 c 128 art 1 s 21

[MS 84.8045] RESTRICTIONS ON OFF-ROAD VEHICLE TRAILS.

Notwithstanding any provision of sections 84.797 to 84.805 or other law to the contrary, the commissioner shall not permit land administered by the commissioner in Cass, Crow Wing, and Hubbard Counties to be used or developed for trails primarily for off-road vehicles as defined in section 84.797, subdivision 7, except:(1) upon approval by the legislature; or (2) in designated off-road vehicle use areas.

History: Minnesota Session Laws 2007, Ch. 57 Sec. 26.

Chapter 84.926, Minnesota Statutes 2007,

84.926 VEHICLE USE ON PUBLIC LANDS; EXCEPTIONS.

Subdivision 1. Exception by permit. Notwithstanding sections [84.773, subdivision 1](#), and [84.777](#), on a case by case basis, the commissioner may issue a permit authorizing a person to operate an off-highway vehicle on individual public trails under the commissioner's jurisdiction during specified times and for specified purposes.

Subd. 2. All-terrain vehicles; managed or limited forests; off trail. Notwithstanding section [84.777](#), but subject to the commissioner's authority under subdivision 5, on state forest lands classified as managed or limited, other than the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest, a person may use an all-terrain vehicle off forest trails or forest roads when: (1) hunting big game or transporting or installing hunting stands during October, November, and December, when in possession of a valid big game hunting license; (2) retrieving big game in September, when in possession of a valid big game hunting license; (3) tending traps during an open trapping season for protected furbearers, when in possession of a valid trapping license; or (4) trapping minnows, when in possession of a valid minnow dealer, private fish hatchery, or aquatic farm license.

Subd. 3. All-terrain vehicles; closed forests; hunting. Notwithstanding section [84.777](#), the commissioner may determine whether all-terrain vehicles are allowed on specific forest roads, on state forest lands classified as closed, for the purpose of hunting big game during an open big game season. The determination shall be by written order as published in the State Register and is exempt from Chap. 14. Sect. [14.386](#) does not apply.

Subd. 4. Off-road and all-terrain vehicles; limited or managed forests; trails.

Notwithstanding section [84.777](#), but subject to the commissioner's authority under subdivision 5, on state forest lands classified as limited or managed, other than the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest, a person may use vehicles registered under chapter 168 or section [84.798](#) or [84.922, including class 2 all-terrain vehicles](#), on forest trails that are not designated for a specific use when:(1) hunting big game or transporting or installing hunting stands during October, November, and December, when in possession of a valid big game hunting license; (2) retrieving big game in September, when in possession of a valid big game hunting license;(3) tending traps during an open trapping season for protected furbearers, when in possession of a valid trapping license; or (4) trapping minnows, when in possession of a valid minnow dealer, private fish hatchery, or aquatic farm license.

Subd. 5. Limitations on off-trail and undesignated trail use. The commissioner may designate areas on state forest lands that are not subject to the exceptions provided in subdivisions 2 and 4. Such designations are not subject to the rulemaking provisions of chapter 14 and section [14.386](#) does not apply. Before designating such areas, the commissioner shall hold a public meeting in the county where the largest portion of the forest lands are located to provide information to and receive comment from the public regarding the proposed designation. Sixty days before the public meeting, notice of the proposed designation shall be

published in the legal newspapers that serve the counties in which the lands are located, in a statewide Department of Natural Resources news release, and in the State Register.

Subd. 6. Operation; class 2 vehicles. Except as provided in subdivision 4, operation of class 2 all-terrain vehicles on lands administered by the commissioner is limited to forest roads, minimum maintenance roads, and trails designated or signed for class 2 all-terrain vehicles.

Subd. 7. Snowmobiles; closed forests; off trail. Forests classified as closed forests are open to off-trail snowmobile use unless prohibited, as determined by the commissioner by written order published in the State Register. The determination is not subject to the rulemaking provisions of chapter 14 and section 14.386 does not apply. **History:** 1984 c 647 s 5; 1986 c 444; 2003 c 128 art 1 s 31; 1Sp2005 c 1 art 2 s 45; 2006 c 281 art 2 s 6

Minnesota Rules, Part 6100.1950

6100.1950 MOTOR VEHICLES AND SNOWMOBILES; FOREST LANDS.

Subpart 1. Classified forest lands. The operation of motor vehicles and snowmobiles on forest lands classified by the commissioner for purposes of motor vehicle use according to subpart 2 and Minnesota Statutes, section 89.002, is regulated according to items A to C.

A. On forest lands classified as managed, a person may operate a motor vehicle only on forest roads and forest trails that are not posted and designated closed and in areas that are posted and designated to allow motor vehicle use, subject to the limitations and exceptions in this part.

B. On forest lands classified as limited, a person may operate a motor vehicle only on forest roads that are not posted and designated closed and on forest trails or areas that are posted and designated to allow motor vehicle use, subject to the limitations and exceptions in this part.

C. No person shall operate a motor vehicle or snowmobile on forest lands classified as closed, unless on frozen public waters where operation is not otherwise prohibited. Motor vehicles that are licensed for use on public highways may be operated on forest roads that are not posted or gated closed. Snowmobiles may operate on designated trails.

Subp. 2. Criteria for classification. The following criteria shall be considered when classifying forest lands for motor vehicle use:

- A. resource sensitivity and management objectives;
- B. resource impact by motorized and nonmotorized use, including erosion, rutting, and impacts on vegetation, wildlife, air, water, or natural habitats;
- C. motorized and nonmotorized recreational opportunity in area;
- D. user needs, such as trails, parking, signs, and access;
- E. the degree and trend of motor vehicle use in the area;
- F. the degree and trend of nonmotor vehicle use in the area;
- G. competing interests among different user groups; and
- H. public safety and law enforcement concerns.

Subp. 3. Notice and public meeting. Before changing the classification of forest lands for motor vehicle use, the commissioner shall provide notice and a public meeting according to items A to C.

A.) A public meeting shall be held in the county where the largest portion of the forest lands are located to provide information to and receive comment from the public regarding the proposed classification change.

B.) Sixty days before the public meeting, notice of the proposed classification change shall be published in legal newspapers that serve the counties in which the lands are located and in a statewide Department of Natural Resources news release and in the State Register. The notice shall include a summary of the proposed action, a request for public comment, and notice of the public meeting.

C.) Twenty-one days before the public meeting, notice of the meeting shall be announced in a statewide Department of Natural Resources news release.

Subp. 4. Commissioner's decision. The commissioner shall make a decision about the proposed classification change after considering the criteria listed in subpart 2 and any public comment received and explaining how the nature and magnitude of the criteria and comments relate to the classification.

Subp. 5. Nonmotorized trails. No person shall operate a motor vehicle or snowmobile on forest lands on a designated nonmotorized trail, including ski, foot, horse, bike, or accessible trail, unless the trail is also posted open for a motorized use. *STAT AUTH: MS 14.045; 14.388; 84.03; 85.052; 85.053; 85.20; 86A.05; 86A.06; 89.031; 89.19 to 89.21; 89.71 HIST: 24 SR 208; 25 SR 782; 27 SR 27*

MS84-777.doc
Rev. 07 Nov. 07

APPENDIX B

Northern Saint Louis County

Summary Tables – Final Proposal

[Incl. Bear Island, Burntside, Kabetogama, Lake Jeanette State Forests]

Table 1. Summary of State Forest Land Ownership: Northern St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Oct. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

State Forest Lands Northern St. Louis County	Statutory Acres (Acres)	DNR-Admin Acres (Acres)	Inventoried Route Miles (Miles)
Bear Island State Forest	157,815	18,605	96.6
Burntside State Forest	74,815	26,220	7.3
Kabetogama State Forest	619,287	159,845	445.2
Lake Jeanette State Forest	11,522	1,384	0.7
<u>Outside</u> State Forest Boundaries	NA	258,855	286.2
Totals	863,439	464,792	836.0

Table 2. State Forest Land Classification: Northern St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Oct. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Proposed State Land Classification (as per motor vehicle use)	Inside State Forest (acres)	Outside State Forest (acres)	<i>Totals</i> (acres)
‘Managed’	153,059	142,824	307,736 (66%)
‘Limited’	19,880	91,868	99,991 (22%)
‘Closed’ (incl. State lands in BWCAW)	24,415	32,746	57,065 (12%)
Totals	197,354	267,438	464,792

Table 3. Areas with Motor Vehicle Use Limitations: No. St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Oct. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Areas with Motor Vehicle Restrictions/Classification	TOTAL SIZE (Acres)	DNR Acres (Acres)	Inventoried Routes (Miles)
Kabetogama State Forest			
Site 1, Ash River East / 'Closed'	69	69	1.0
Site 2, Ash River West / 'Limited'	3,944	2,504	8.4
Site 3, Black Bay Trails / 'Closed'	1,054	370	0.0
Site 4, Echo Lake / 'Closed'	1,798	979	4.0
Site 5, Elephant Lake / 'Closed'	3,587	2,385	3.1
Site 6, Gheen Hill / 'Closed'	630	630	6.7
Site 7, Willow Valley / 'Closed'	1,460	1,401	9.2
Outside State Forest Boundaries			
Site 8, McNiven / 'Closed'	3,741	954	4.4
Totals	16,2839	8,338	36.8

Table 4. Final Route Designations: State & County Lands, North St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Oct. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Route Designations No. St. Louis County	State Land Designations (miles)		St. Louis County Designations (miles)	
Total Inventoried Routes	828.0	829.2	537.5	537.8
System Forest Road		37.0		69.2
Min. Maintenance Forest Road	146.6	150.0		135.1
Non-designated Routes		572.6		320.3
Proactive closures	34.8	570.9	15.5	17.3 319.6
In closed forests	0.0			0.3
In limited forests	71.8	63.4	32.8	20.5
In managed forests (access routes)	466.0	472.7	271.7	281.5
ATV & OHM Trail		4.4	9.2	2.4 4.2
ORV Trails		0.0		0.0
Dual-Designated MMR/OHV		4.4	3.5	0.0
Gated / Seasonally Closed		30.5		3.0
Non-Motor Trails		35.8	31.6	7.8 6.7

RED indicates changes to the draft proposal resulting from agency and public review.

Table 5. Route Designations: State Forest Lands Only, No. St. Louis County

Source: Forest Access Route Unpublished Data, Oct. 2008. DNR DRS. Generated using ArcView extension.

Route Designations (State Lands Only)	Lands Inside State Forest (miles)		Lands Outside State Forest (miles)	
Total Inventoried Routes	549.8 549.8 546.0		286.2 286.2 283.2	
System Forest Road	35.1		1.9	
Min. Maintenance Forest Road	108.5		42.7 42.7 41.5	
Non-designated Routes	23.3 0.0 12.7 321.4	357.4	11.5 0.0 52.4 50.7 151.3	215.2 215.2 213.5
Proactive closures				
In <i>closed</i> forests				
In <i>limited</i> forests				
In <i>managed</i> forests (<i>access routes</i>)				
ATV & OHM Trail	3.6		3.9 5.6	
ORV Trails	0.0		0.0	
Dual-Designated MMR/OHV	0.0		4.4 3.5	
Gated / Seasonally Closed	20.5		41.4 10.0	
Non-Motor Trails	24.7 20.9		41.1 10.7	

RED indicates changes to the draft proposal resulting from agency and public review.

NoStLouisSumTables.doc

21 Oct. 08

APPENDIX C

Areas with Motor Vehicle Use Limitations In Northern St. Louis County, Minnesota

Upon this plan's effective date, all state and county lands within the following eight areas will be reclassified (as either '*limited*' or '*closed*') with regard to motor vehicle use. All but the Ash River West site will be reclassified as '*closed*'; and all but the McNiven Site are located within the statutory boundaries of the Kabetogama State Forest. All of the sites are remote, and all share a history of non-motorized recreational use, mostly by walking hunters. Many already contain developed non-motor trails and support facilities (e.g., gated vehicle access and parking).

The sites, described below, and depicted on planning maps, include a mix of state, county, private (industrial and non-industrial) lands, and National Forest System lands. Proposed motor vehicle use restrictions will apply only to state and county forest lands within these sites.

Total (All 8 Sites) = 16,283 Gross Acres / 8,338 Acres State Land Only

Site 1. Ash River East, Sec. 32 of T69N R19W (at end of Ash River Trail/Co. 129)

- Size: 69 acres. Includes 1-mile of inventoried routes.
- Ownership: 100% State forest lands.
- Boundaries: Bounded by Voyageurs's National Park (VNP).
- Perimeter access: Access to parking area via County Road 129.
- Veg./Topography: Mix of upland aspen, birch and pine. Topography is level and wet to hilly and rocky.
- Low areas are heavier clay and organic soils subject to rutting.
- ***DNR Action:*** *Reclassify as 'closed' to motor vehicle use due to wetland type clay and organic soils (i.e., high REAC scores for inventoried routes). Area is bounded by VNP. Existing bike / ski trails within this area are currently maintained by VNP. These trails connect to additional trails within the National Park.*

Site 2. Ash River West, T68-69N R20-21W (4 mi. east of Hwy 53/Co. 129)

- Size: 3,944 acres. Includes 8.4 miles of inventoried routes.
- Ownership: 2,504 acres (or 63%) are DNR Forestry administered. Two private parcels within this area.
- Boundaries: East of Hwy 53, north of Co. Rd. 129, the Ash River Trail. Bounded by VNP on north, by snowmobile / bike trail on the south, and by streams on the east and west.
- Perimeter access: Vehicle access via County Road 129 across snowmobile/bike trail.
- Veg./Topography: Mix of upland aspen, birch and pine with lowland brush and black spruce. Topography is level and wet to hilly and rocky.
- ***DNR Action:*** *Reclassify as 'limited' to motor vehicle use due to wetland type clay and organic soils (i.e., med-high REAC scores for inventoried routes). This will limit resource damage from vehicle use outside of the big game hunting season. Private property owners will be granted vehicle permits across state land to access their property. Will also require new signage and possibly gating of some access routes.*

Site 3. Black Bay Hunter Walking Trails, Sect. 11 of T63N R18W

- Size: 1,054 acres. No inventoried motor routes.
- Ownership: 370 ac. (35%) state forestry land; 200 ac. (19%) mixed St. Louis County and National Forest System Lands; the remainder (about 46%) is privately held.
- Boundaries: This peninsula lies between Black Bay and Norwegian Bay on Lake Vermilion.
- Public access by boat, with some local-use trails developed and used by local property owners.
- Veg./Topography: Mixed aspen, pine and hardwoods. Rugged topography.
- ***DNR Action:*** *Reclassify as 'closed' to motor vehicle use due to protect and enhance the existing non-motorized walking hunter trail system and recreational experience. This upland hunter walking trail system was developed and is maintained jointly by MN DNR and St. Louis Co. with the assistance of a local Sportsman's Association.*

Site 4. Echo Lake Hunter Walking Area, Sect. 36 of T66N R17W

- Size: 1,798 acres. Includes 4.0 miles of inventoried routes and a designated waterfowl refuge.
- Ownership: 979 ac. (54%) state forest land; 580 ac (32%) mixed USFS & St. Louis County lands; 160 ac. (9%) Potlatch Corp.; and about 80 ac.(4%) of non-industrial private land.
- Boundaries: Bounded on the north by the Echo Trail; on the east by Picket Creek; on the west by a USFS Road which is open to HLV, but closed to OHV, and, on the south by the state land ownership boundary. Within Superior National Forest.
- Perimeter access: Vehicle access to the trail network is via Echo Trail from north.
- Veg./Topography: Contains a mix of upland hardwood types (e.g., aspen, jack pine, oak).
- ***DNR Action:*** *Reclassify as 'closed' to motor vehicle use due to protect and enhance the existing non-motorized walking hunter trail system and recreational experience. This upland hunter walking trail system was developed and is maintained jointly by MN DNR, USFS and St. Louis Co.*

Site 5. Elephant Lake Remote Hunting Area, Sect. 34 of T66N R19W

- Size: 3,587 acres. Includes 3.1 miles of inventoried routes.
- Ownership: 2,385 ac. (66%) state forestry lands; 1,162 ac. (32%) mixed USFS and county tax-forfeited forest lands; and 40 ac. of private non-industrial property.
- Boundaries: Located SW of Elephant Lake. Bounded on east by Co. Road 180; on the north by the Clover Road; and, on the south and west by an established snowmobile trail.
- Perimeter access: Vehicle access is off of County 180.
- Veg./Topography: Dominant type is aspen with spruce, fir and cedar. Developed forest wildlife openings. Wetland complex containing two bog lakes is a designated waterfowl refuge – one of very few in NE MN.
- ***DNR Action:*** *Reclassify as 'closed' to motor vehicle use due to protect and enhance the non-motorized hunter recreational experience, especially for walking deer hunters. This remote hunting area was developed and is maintained jointly by MN DNR and St. Louis Co.*

Site 6. Gheen Hill Walking Trails, Sect. 36 of T64N R20W

- Size: 630 acres. Includes 6.7 miles of inventoried routes.
- Ownership: 630 acres, 100% State forest lands.
- Boundaries: West of Hwy 53, just north of Gheen Corner. Bounded by large swamp on the SW.
- Perimeter access: Primary access off Highway 53. Additional access via Minimum Maintenance SFR that forms the northern boundary.

- Veg./Topography: Predominantly aspen, red and white pine, and fir on a ridge that gradually descends into wetland on the south and west.
- Existing year-round (non-motor) recreational trail system lies within surrounding state and county forests which are proposed to retain their 'managed' classification as per motor vehicle use.
- **DNR Action:** *Reclassify as 'closed' to motor vehicle use due to protect and enhance this popular non-motorized hunting and ski area, which is also being considered as a candidate for 'watchable wildlife' designation. This hunter walking trail system was developed and is maintained jointly by MN DNR and St. Louis Co.*

Site 7. Willow Valley Hunter Walking Trails, Sect. 17 of T63N R21W

- Size: 1,460 acres. Includes 9.2 miles of inventoried routes.
- Ownership: 1,401 acres (96%) state forestry lands; with misc. county and private ownership.
- Boundaries: Bounded on the north by Willow River and property lines; on the east by a township road; on the south by property lines and wetlands, and on the west by property lines.
- Perimeter access: Trailheads are located on the east and west boundaries off of township roads.
- Veg./Topography: Rolling uplands dominated by aspen with pine and interspersed wetlands.
- **DNR Action:** *Reclassify as 'closed' to motor vehicle use due to protect and enhance this established non-motorized walking hunter trail system. This trail system was developed and is maintained jointly by MN DNR and St. Louis County.*

Site 8. McNiven Hunter Walking Trails, Sect. 16 of T19N R19W

- Size: 3,741 acres. Includes 4.4 miles of inventoried routes. *[Outside State Forest]*
- Ownership: 2,620 ac. (70%) USFS land; 954 ac. (26%) state forest lands; 160 ac. (4%) private lands.
- Boundaries: Bounded on the west, north and east (partially) by Slow Creek; and on the south by County 469. County 25 bisects the area running north-south through the center.
- Perimeter access: Trailheads located off of County 25 and County 469.
- Veg./Topography: Rolling topography with aspen-birch and spruce-fir covert types.
- **DNR Action:** *Reclassify as 'closed' to motor vehicle use to protect and enhance the non-motorized walking hunter trail system in this area which was developed and is maintained cooperatively by MN DNR and USFS, in coordination with Potlatch Corp. This unit lies outside of State Forest boundaries, but inside of the Superior National Forest's Laurentian District.*

Other Hunter Walking Opportunities Within the Planning Unit

While specific site histories vary, most of the trails were established by DNR in cooperation with county and federal partners in an effort to provide non-motorized small game hunting opportunities. Most of the sites are gated and prohibit motor vehicle use from Sept 1 – Nov 1 annually. The team proposes to continue to manage these areas through the use of seasonally closed gated access – with no change in forest classification.

Pelican River North Trails

Existing hunter/walking trails located NE of Casson. The goal is to provide non-motorized hunting opportunities through a series of developed hunter walking trails.

Bearscratch Trails

This gated hunter walking area, developed and managed by DNR Wildlife, has a history of difficult enforcement issues. DNR Wildlife owns an easement across private land for hunter access along the Minimum Maintenance Road. The terms of the easement allow non-motorized recreational access year-round and motorized access from September 1- December 31. A second gate is closed September 1 -

November 1 to provide non-motorized grouse hunting. This gate is opened November 1 annually to allow for motorized access for deer hunting.

Crane Lake Trails

Existing hunter/walking trails located just south of Crane Lake. The goal here is to provide for non-motorized hunting opportunities on developed, maintained hunter walking trails.

Bulldog-Hanson Hunter Walking Area

Located north of Pelican Lake, this area employs a gated road system to provide non-motorized hunting opportunities.

Celina Trails

This short hunter walking trail exists entirely on state land. The DNR is working cooperatively with St. Louis County to expand to the east (to County Lands) in conjunction with upcoming timber sales. The goal is to provide non-motorized hunting opportunities with developed, maintained hunter walking trails.

Mooseline Trails

This hunter walking trail network was developed about 15 years ago. Located on County 16 just west of the Mooseline Road, the aim here is to provide non-motorized hunting opportunities with developed, maintained hunter walking trails.

White Corner Hunter Walking Trails

This established hunter walking trail system was developed on state land just SE of Aurora, MN. The aim is to provide non-motorized hunting opportunities with developed, maintained hunter walking trails.

Site Maps – Attached

Site 1 – Ash River East / ‘Closed’ & **Site 2** – Ash River West / ‘Limited’

Site 3 – Black Bay Trails / ‘Closed’

Site 4 – Echo Lake / ‘Closed’

Site 5 – Elephant Lake / ‘Closed’

Site 6 – Gheen Hill / ‘Closed’ & **Site 7** – Willow Valley / ‘Closed’

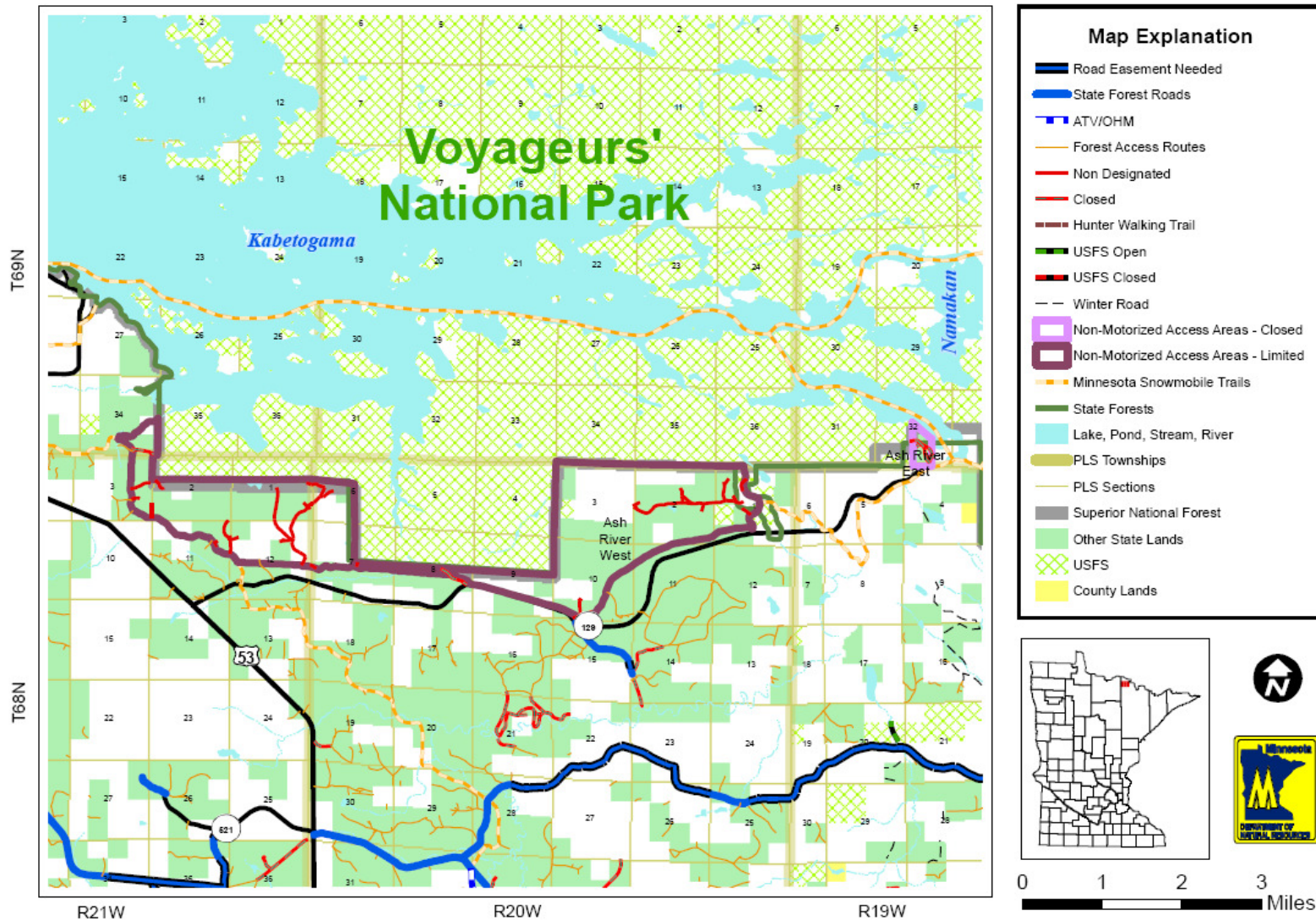
Site 8 – McNiven / ‘Closed’

MotorLimitedAreas.doc

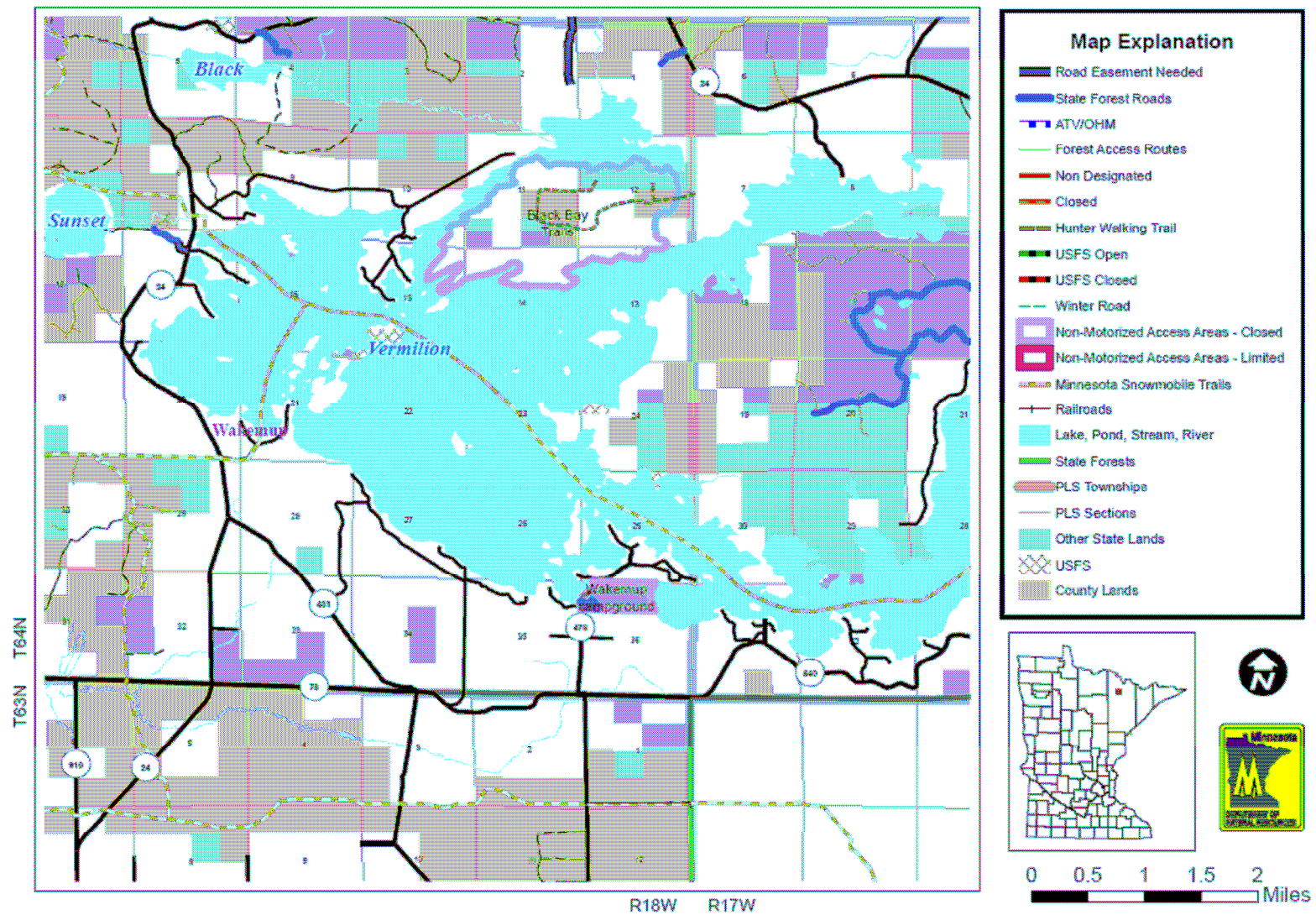
10/21/08

North St. Louis County Forest Road and Trail Designation Plan
Ash River Non-Motorized Access Areas
March 4, 2008

Draft

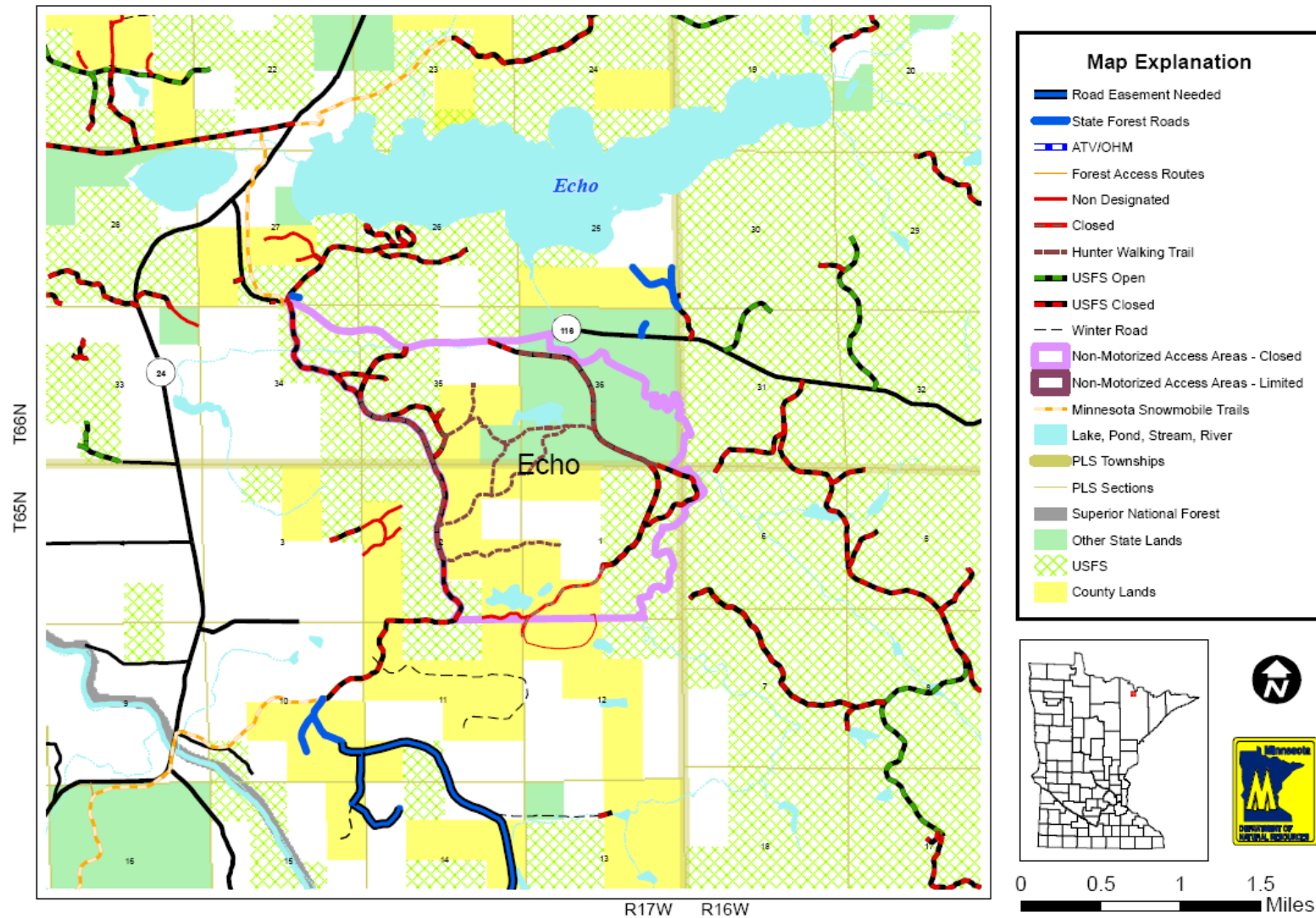


North St. Louis County Forest Road and Trail Designation Plan
Black Bay Trails and Wakemup Campground Non-Motorized Access Areas
March 4, 2008



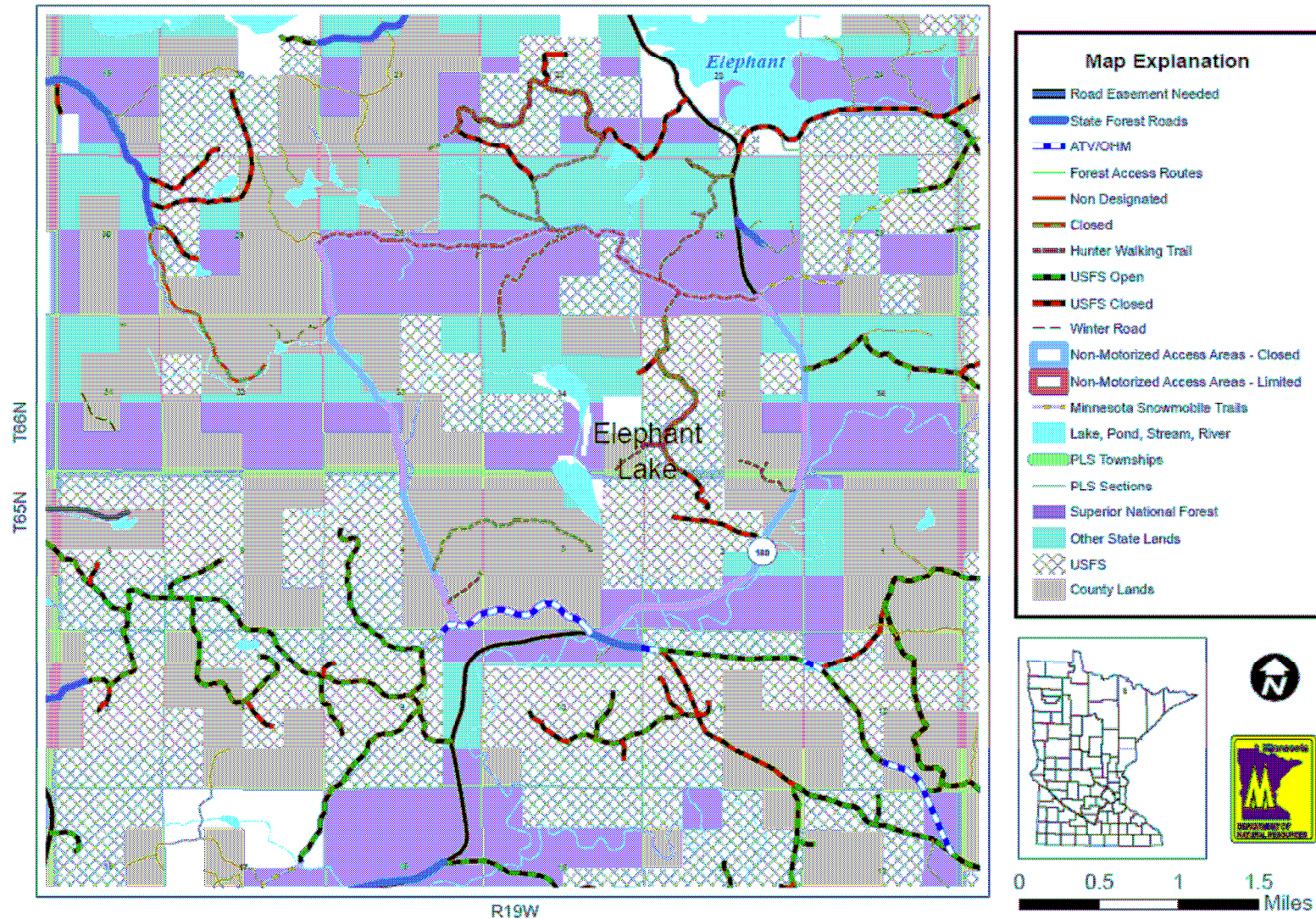
**North St. Louis County Forest Road and Trail Designation Plan
Echo Non-Motorized Access Area
March 4, 2008**

Draft

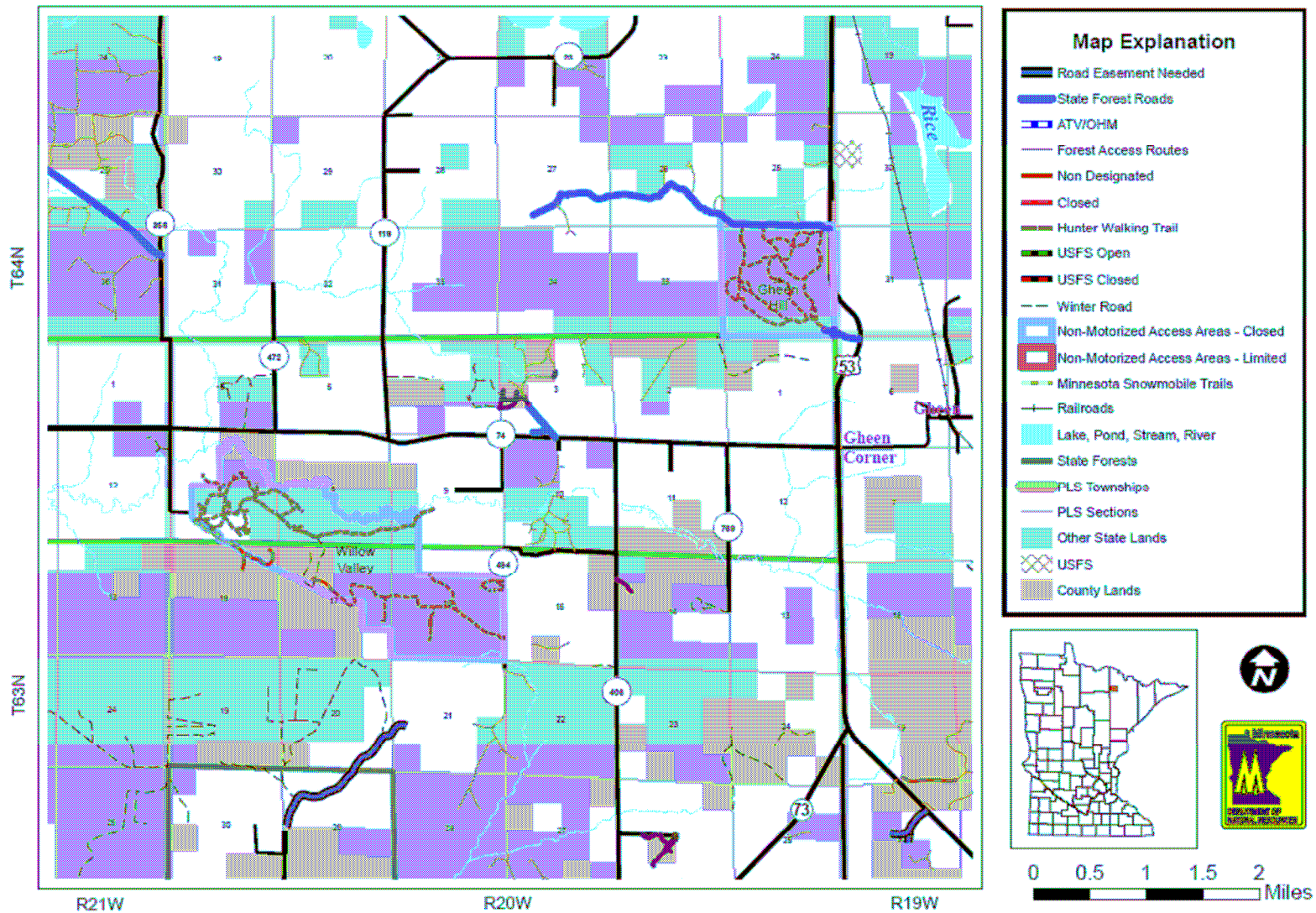


North St. Louis County Forest Road and Trail Designation Plan
 Elephant Non-Motorized Access Area
 March 4, 2008

Draft



**North St. Louis County Forest Road and Trail Designation Plan
Willow Valley and Gheen Hill Non-Motorized Access Areas
March 4, 2008**



North St. Louis County Forest Road and Trail Designation Plan
McNinen Non-Motorized Access Area
March 4, 2008

Draft

