

**Response to Comments on the Proposed
Forest Classification
and
Forest Road and Trail Designations
for
Northern Border State Forest Lands**

December 22, 2008



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Northern Border Road & Trail Project Team

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Acknowledgments

The DNR Northern Border Road & Trail Project Team gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following individuals to the forest road and trail designation process.

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INTRODUCTION

On August 4, 2008 the MN DNR published a notice of the proposed motor vehicle use classification and road/trail designations for State Forest lands in the Northern Border planning unit in the *State Register* (page 257). The proposals were described in MN DNR statewide news releases dated August 5, 2007 and September 9, 2008. An addendum to the plan was released on October 1, 2008. Public meetings on the proposed classification and road/trail designations were held on October 6, 2008 in Kelliher, October 8, 2008 in Warroad, and October 9, 2008 in Baudette to explain the proposal and to receive comments. The public comment period ended on October 17, 2008.

The DNR received comment forms, letters and e-mails from individuals and organizations. The DNR appreciates the time and effort of everyone who commented on the proposals. The draft proposals were improved and clarified as a result of the public review process.

This document is a compilation of the comments received and the DNR's response to the concerns about the proposed motor vehicle use classification and road/trail designations. The DNR's motor vehicle use classification and road and trail use designation decisions for State Forest lands in the Northern Border planning unit will be based on the draft proposal and the response to comments. The classification and road and trail designations will be implemented by publication of written orders of the Commissioner of Natural Resources published in the *State Register*.

The DNR uses a content analysis process to develop a response to concerns expressed by commenters. Comments were grouped by topic and statements of public concern were developed. The agency response to topics of concern and changes to the public review draft proposal are contained in this document.

COMPILATION OF COMMENTS

Transcribed comments are presented below. The transcription process maintained the content of the comment to the extent possible. Greetings and closings were not transcribed. There was no attempt to correct spelling, grammar, or misstatement of facts. There may be some errors due to illegible handwriting or typing errors by the transcribers. The comments are listed in alphabetical order by the last name of the person submitting the comment.

The numbers and letters to the left of the comments are hyperlinked to the topics that are addressed in the agency response section of this document.

	(The Man), Chad
01	<p>This is a comment relating to the proposed Shotley "Area of Limitations" classification within the Northern Border project area.</p> <p>I do not agree with the area being classified as a "walking area only" for 100% of the year. I would like to see the area maintain its managed classification. Most often, ATV use is done responsibly and in a manner which does not damage or cause erosion within the forest. There are already far too many laws and regulations on the books restricting the many in order to make management of the few easier.</p> <p>Please consider removing the "Area of Limitations" classification from the Shotley area.</p>
	Crabtree, Karen
02	<p>I understand there is some discussion considering the Lost River State Forest and turning it into non_OHV area. I just wanted to express my thoughts to you about this. My family lives adjacent to this land. When I was younger, my dad taught me how to trap muskrat, weasel, mink, beaver etc. We did all this trapping on that land. He taught me about the importance of each animal also and we used to watch them. I saw a moose at the age of 13 out there as we were 4 wheeling down a trail as it stopped at a ditch to drink. I would never have been able to see these things if that were a non-OHV area. We have trail rides through the area still. We have picnics and pick blueberries in this area. In order to get to these areas you must have a 4 wheeler. Over all these years the forest there has been reserved even with the 4wheeler trails on it. Why now do they think they are harming them? It is such a beautiful</p>

	area and would be a shame to close it off in this manner.
	Dolinski, Brad
03	With all due respect please hear me out on my comments. In Lake of the Woods County we have a great amount of state owned land. This land is open to the public to use correct? Now with the new classification system your office will be cutting a number of our local residents off from enjoying the land we've grown up using. I could bring you to places that you didn't even know existed, blueberry patches that would shock most, deer trails that look like cattle crossings. These are places that you can't walk to, at least these are places that most people don't walk to. I have a patch of hunting land owned by my father; I wonder how long it is going to be before I won't have access to our land? The reason I ask this is the land is bordered by state owned land on all four sides. The only way into the plot is a old logging trail that I got permission from the local DNR to use. It's roughly 2.5 miles into our land and it's not somewhere you can just take a stroll into. It seems to me that even though we don't seem to have a huge problem with ATVs in Lake of the Woods County yet; we are being grouped and punished with the rest of the state. I could understand your efforts if we were back in tearing the sod to a muck mess but that isn't what all of us are doing.
04	When was the last time most of your "walking trails" were cut or planted? Where is the money for the wildlife plots we could be worrying about rather than cutting the taxpaying community off from the land we've grown to love? Perhaps we could find it in our hearts to use this reclassification funds to build an atv trail for people so we don't step foot on the DNR land. I guess I'm just disappointed with the way the government is handling this situation, the land belongs to Minnesota residents not to the DNR.
	Droogsma, John (06OCT2008)
05	Please allow me to introduce myself, my name is John Droogsma I am 41 years old, and live in Appleton, MN. Our family has a deer camp in Lake of the Woods County (Rako). My father started deer hunting there in 1954. We have allot of memories including bear hunts. I can't believe the DNR's banning the use of four wheelers for baiting? I understand they can do damage but I have not seen or heard reports of ATV damage in our area. I know there are problem areas but why blanket the whole state with restrictions, deal with the problem areas!
	I was looking forward to appling for a bear permit next year, but now that I have to carry my bait to my bait stations, I can honestly say my bear hunting days are over in Minnesota. I live 385 miles from our camp, and with \$3.50 gas I can't make a trip every weekend so I put out allot of bait. I start a bait with fifty pounds dog food, twenty-five pounds oats, fifty pounds apples, and twenty-five pounds candy. How many people are willing to carry that to bait sites, and if the site doesn't get hit I have to start the process all over. It's too bad my two sons will not enjoy the same memories I had with my father bear hunting together in northern Minnesota. I've heard spring in Canada in nice, maybe I will try my luck there.
	Droogsma, John (07OCT2008)
	I emailed you yesterday concerning ATV traffic on State lands. I was informed it was on all State lands. I received a brochure from the DNR explaining the it applies to State Forests, the information in the brochure is very informative and explains the laws clearly.
	Please disregard my email concerning this issue, I was uninformed and I should have looked into the matter myself. ----- Mr. Droogsma,
	No problem. I understand the concerns related to use of ATVs for bear baiting. Bear baiting is not one of the activities covered by the hunting and trapping exceptions in state laws (MN Statutes 84.926). It is illegal to create new trails on state forest land or to operate an ATV off-trail while bear baiting. However, on state forest lands classified as 'managed' with respect to motor vehicle use it is OK to use ATVs on existing routes as long as you do not cause rutting, erosion, or damage to trees. State forest lands in Lake of the Woods County are classified as 'managed' for motor vehicle use. I hope you can find areas suitable for baiting near existing routes on state forest lands.
	Jack Olson, Trail Planner MN Department of Natural Resources

	Droogsma, John (08OCT2008)
06	Thank you for your reply. I understand the DNR 's concern on ATV traffic. I still do not understand the blanket policies, start dealing with the problem areas. Last night I went to Find the trails web site, to my surprise all the State land around our camp has been reclassified as State Forest. I looked at the Northern border map, there are trails that are open for ATV use for bear baiting, and one trail in particular that is now a "proactive closure", It just happens to be my best baiting location, It can be a muck hole, but what do you expect it's located in bog country, it looks the same today as it did ten years ago, I would be willing to bet there are less than five ATV's that use it per year, and three are deer hunters. With these types of blanket policies and the rising costs of license fees and the no recreation policies of the DNR it's no wonder license sales are dropping and parents are not taking kids hunting anymore.
	Fiedler, Josh
07	I'm writing you to let you know that I oppose the ban of creating walking areas only in the Beltrami County state forest. I'm a owner of land just north of Kelliher on the old Shockley road. Our Cabin lies in section 25 or 26 in Beltrami County. I would like to see that land stay as a managed area, allowing class one AVTs access to these areas. We use our ATV's on the state ground responsibly and would like to continue to use them to support our hunting privileges and in our safe recreational usage. I'm not opposed to banning the use of off road trucks or large off road vehicles weighing more than 800lbs. Our Cabin lies in section 25 or 26 in Beltrami County.
	Fiedler, Melvin
08	I am part owner of a hunting cabin on 20 acres of land on Shotley Road, directly across the road from the land you proposed for walking only area with no provisions for ATV use. That is a very large area and we use that land for hunting and recreational purposes. Some of our deer stands are two to two and a half miles into that area and requires an ATV to get to them, and if a deer is harvested that far out in the woods we would have to drag it all the way back to the hunting cabin, which could put someone at risk of having a heart attack. We use our ATV's very responsibly and we instill that in our sons and daughters as well. I am asking that the use of ATV's in that area remains in place.
	Mortenson, Curt
09	Having grown up at "Mort's Dock" on Upper Red Lake and with a cabin on Waldo Road near the Shotley forest trail area, I've walked and used ATVs on these trails over many years especially during the grouse and deer seasons. As a result, I would oppose the closing of these trails to ATV use. Frankly, I doubt there are enough young, upcoming hunters who would walk these trails and many older people with physical limitations (a bad knee for me) won't be able to walk these trails either. I feel unless ATVs are allowed these trails will go unused which would be a shame.
	Mortenson, Todd
10	I understand the need for walking trails if they ever get used. We bear and deer hunt in the Shotley proposed area, especially section 15 – T153 – R31. This area should be moved west to Blossum Road where most of the walking trails are. Worst case gate for walking only during September 1 or 15 to November 1 then re-open to ATV use. This would allow baiting in August and for dragging deer in November.
	Nelson (Norstebon), Becky
11	<p>I recently read about the DNR's plan looking into all of the trails in the state forests in Minnesota, and the possible reclassification of some of them. I am writing to you specifically about the section of land in the Lost River State Forest North of the city of Roseau.</p> <p>My grandparents live adjacent to the land the DNR wants to designate as a non-OHV use area. I grew up hunting and exploring the woods around there, and learned almost everything I know about forests and wildlife from my dad while accompanying him on 4-wheeler rides through the forest. That area is a beautiful landscape, and I understand the desire to protect it. But there are miles and miles of land in the Lost River State Forest. Why must the land directly adjacent to other people's property, and the land that is used and loved by the people that live there, be the land selected to be restricted? My grandfather can no longer walk without a walker. But he is able to ride on a 4-wheeler. Should he not be able to enjoy the forest right next to their fields because he can't walk through it on his own? What about other people who can no longer hike through the forests? My nieces and nephews are too young to walk through the forests, and they enjoy being out there and learning about all the cool animals and plants. My niece</p>

	<p>Jordan saw her first "porkytail" (porcupine) out in that forest recently. She never would have had the opportunity to be out there if those trails were closed off to OHVs. I hope one day I can take my kids back up there, and that they can learn about porcupines, weasles, mink, fox, spruce and pine trees and all kinds of other animals and plants.</p> <p>I realize that there are many facets to this argument, and I acknowledge that I am only one voice. But I would ask you to consider how important the forest is to the people of Northern Minnesota while doing your calculations and making your decisions.</p>
	<p>Otto, Al (Upper Red Lake Assn.)</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>How and where can I look to download maps to show area's to be closed to motorized use and walking only hunting. The site referred to on page 14 of the hand out I picked up Monday night in Kelliher?</p> <p>I have tried to contact Ron Rabe, but he is out of his office, so I am hoping you can help me. I spent a lot of time trying to find the maps with no luck.</p> <p>Thanks Al Otto Pres. Upper Red Lake Assn.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Mr. Otto, The maps that were displayed at the meeting in Kelliher and that are referred to on page 14 of the plan are on the DNR web site at: http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/ohv/designation/status.html#N Click on the link for the 'Red Lake Designation Map.' Send me any comments or concerns about specific routes or the proposed 'Areas with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use' by October 17th.</p> <p>The proposed route designations for state forest lands in adjacent Koochiching County are also available for public review and comment. The map for Koochiching County is on the web site at: http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/ohv/designation/status.html#K The closing date for comments on routes in Koochiching County is November 7th.</p> <p>Let me know if you have difficulty in viewing or downloading the maps.</p> <p>Jack Olson, Trail Planner MN Department of Natural Resources</p>

RED LAKE BAND
of CHIPPEWA INDIANS
Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 279, Red Lake, MN 56671



Phone 218-679-3959
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Memorandum

To: Jack Olson (MN DNR – Trail and Waterways)

From: Al Pemberton (Red Lake DNR - Director)

Date: 9/8/08

Subject: Northern Border ATV/OHV Plan

Dear Jack Olson,

Upon review of the Northern Border Forest Classification and Route Designation Proposal, the Red Lake Band of Chippewa (Band) has identified two areas of concern. Attached are two maps of locations of concern (T – 57 R – 31, Section 8) and (T -159 R – 32, Section 15). The Band believes the trail segments depicted by yellow circles will promote unauthorized use and/or trespass on Red Lake Tribal Land (indicate by Red). The Band requests that these trails segments should be eliminated or rerouted, as the only way to currently access these trail segments is via Red Lake Tribal Land.

T. 157N. - R. 31W. Section 8 - NW ¼, SW ¼ - Red Lake Tribal Land

Specifically, the Band requests that both the south and west trail segments should be eliminated or rerouted, as the only way to connect these trails is via Red Lake Tribal Land (see attached map T – 157 R – 31, Section 8).

T. 159N. - R. 32W. Section 15 – SW ¼, NE ¼ - Red Lake Tribal Land

Specifically, the Band believes that both the North and Southeast trail segments should be eliminated or rerouted, as the only way to connect these trails is via Red Lake Tribal Land (see attached map T – 159 R – 32, Section 15).

It should be noted that non-members caught on Red Lake Band Lands shall be subject to prosecution for trespassing in the tribal court, and shall also be subject to forfeiture of equipment at the time they are apprehended

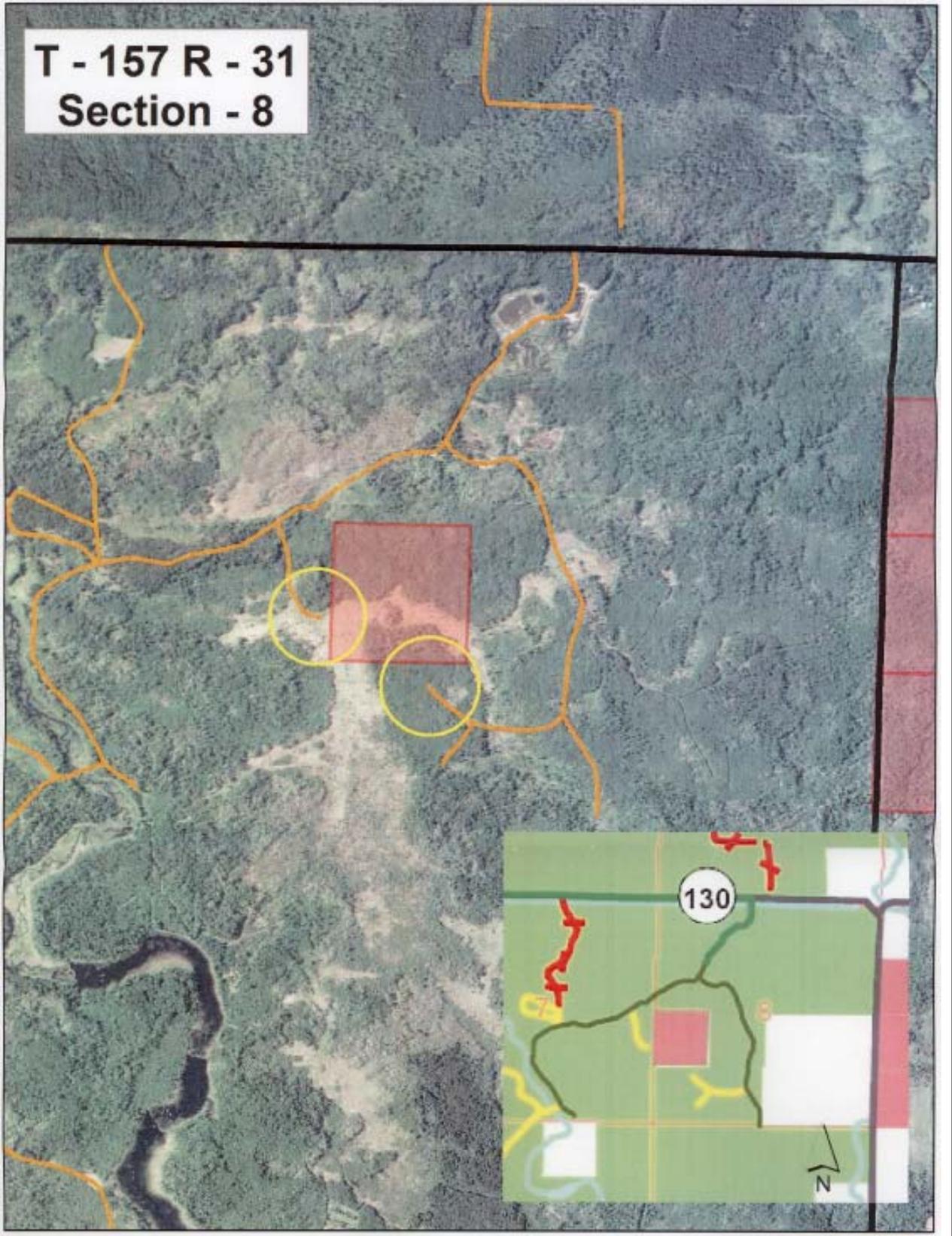
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "Al Pemberton", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

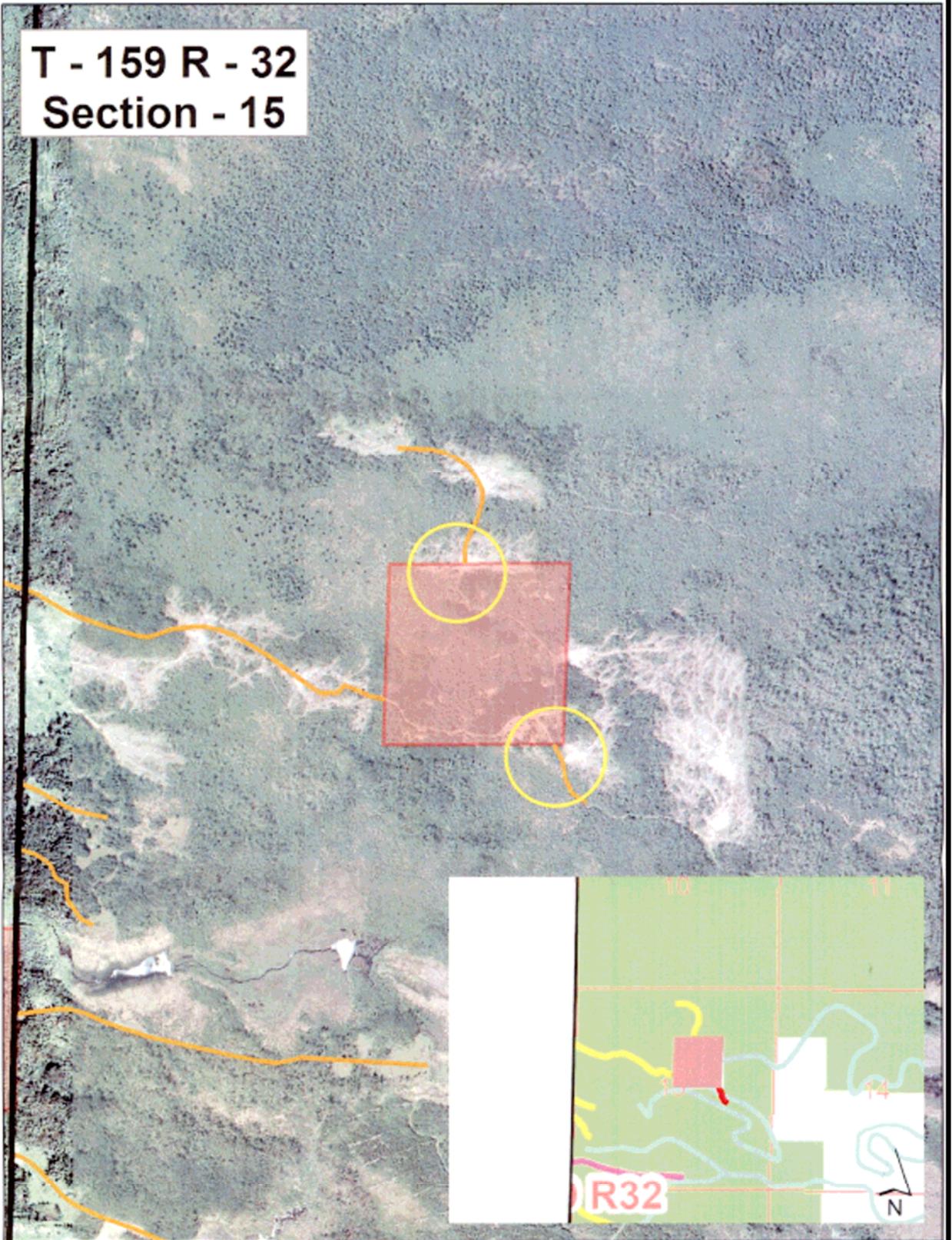
Al Pemberton
Director
Red Lake Department of Natural Resources

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**T - 157 R - 31
Section - 8**



T - 159 R - 32
Section - 15



	Rybaski, Sarah
14	<p>I would like to comment on the proposed Shotley "Area of Limitations" classification within the Northern Border project area.</p> <p>I do not agree with the area being classified as a "walking area only" for 100% of the year. I would like to see the area maintain its managed classification. We use our ATV's responsibly and in a manner not to damage or cause erosion to the forest. We would like to continue using our ATV's during the big game season.</p> <p>Please consider removing the "Area of Limitations" classification from the Shotley area.</p>
	Salzl, Chris
15	<p>I would like to comment on the proposed Shotley "Area of Limitations" classification within the Northern Border project area. Our family owns property adjacent to the area surrounding the Shotley Hunter Walking Trail. Our family has hunted in and around this area since 1973. We have seen many changes over the years, some good and some bad. On certain weekends of the year you will find up to four generations of family at our camp.</p> <p>I agree with this area being managed, but do not agree with the area being classified as a "walking area only" for 100% of the year. Our family has several Class 1 ATV's that we currently use in the area during hunting seasons. We use our ATV's responsibly and in a manner not to damage or cause erosion to the forest. We would like to continue using our ATV's during the big game season in this area.</p> <p>Please consider removing the "Area of Limitations" classification from the Shotley area.</p>
	Salzl, Jacob (13OCT2008)
16	<p>It has come to my attention that there has been discussion regarding the use of OHV's the state forest trails near Red Lake. I have hunted this land for 10 years and have spent 2-3 weeks a year in the area since 1995. What I have noticed is that nearly everyone who uses this land use either ATV's or four-wheel drive pickups to get around. What I have noticed over the years is that the vast majority of the people using the roads and trails have a great deal of respect for the environment. If the trails in the area were limited to walking access only land use in the area would greatly depreciate. Listing the Lost River and Red Lake state forests as anything other than managed lands would ultimately lead to less hunting in the area which would result in the overpopulation of many species including but not limited to deer, grouse, and black bear. I do not think restricting the use of the state forest land is a good idea.</p> <hr/> <p>Mr. Salzl</p> <p>Can you be more specific as to the location of concern? The majority of the Lost River and Red Lake state forests are proposed for classification as managed with respect to motor vehicle use. There are 4 proposed 'Areas with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use.' The areas are Sprague Creek, Larson Lake, Saum, and Shotley. Is it one of these areas or all of them that is of concern?</p> <p>Jack Olson, Trail Planner MN Department of Natural Resources</p>
	Salzl, Jacob (14OCT2008)
	<p>The land I'm most concerned with is the state forest property on the north side of Shotley Road NE across for the Current homestead and the Salzl property between Shotley and Waldo Road. If I'm not mistaken area does fall under the land use review.</p>
	Salzl, Kelly
17	<p>I would like to comment on the proposed Shotley "Area of Limitations" classification within the Northern Border project area. I do not agree with the area being classified as a "walking area only" for 100% of the year. I would like to see the area maintain its managed classification. We use our ATV's responsibly and in a manner not to damage or</p>

	<p>cause erosion to the forest. We would like to continue using our ATV's during the big game season.</p> <p>Please consider removing the "Area of Limitations" classification from the Shotley area.</p>
	<p>Salzl, Paul (13OCT2008)</p>
<p>18</p>	<p>I was informed this weekend while at our cabin on Shotley Road NE of the proposed re designation of the land across the road from our as walk only area. I would like to get more information on this if I could.</p> <p>I have some concerns with this in that we hunt and use this land quite a bit from August thru the end of deer hunting and other times thru the year off and on. We have talked that it would be nice if it was closed to large Off Road Vehicles and Pickup trucks but would like the option of using ATV's on this land.</p> <p>I have three boys who have started hunting with me in the past years and have been trying to teach them how to be responsible when using the trails for ATVing and hunting.</p> <p>In the years past when I am teaching hunter education classes I have used the example of the land up north and the trails and how in the middle of no where on a trail you find beer cans. I teach them and my own kids of the importance of leaving the land as you found it or even better.</p> <p>Please send me some information to help me better understand what the real deal is. I have talked with Ron Rabe and he was very helpful but said I should get the info from you.</p> <hr/> <p>Paul,</p> <p>The plan and maps with the proposed motor vehicle use classification and route designations are on the DNR web site at http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/ohv/designation/status.html#N Click on the link for the 'Red Lake Designation Map' to see the boundaries of the proposed Shotley Area with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use and the proposed hunter walking trail.</p> <p>The idea behind the hunter walking trail is to provide an area for those who prefer to walk while hunting and not be passed by ATVs or other motor vehicles. There is also concern about rutting on some of the routes, especially those running north-south along the section lines. Perhaps your idea of closing the routes to pickups would reduce the rutting, although I do not know what types of vehicles are causing the problem. If we do not designate the Area with Limitations and hunter walking trails, these routes would either be non-designated access routes in a managed forest or proactively closed to motor vehicle use if the rutting is deemed unacceptable. All types of motor vehicles, including pickups can use non-designated routes in a managed forest. It is illegal to cause ruts, erosion, or damage to trees when operating a motor vehicle on non-designated routes.</p> <p>If you have additional questions or comments, please send them to me by October 17th.</p> <p>Jack Olson, Trail Planner MN Department of Natural Resources</p>
	<p>Salzl, Paul (14OCT2008)</p>
	<p>Jack</p> <p>Thank you for getting back to me so soon. I agree with you on that both ATV's and pickups cause rutting on the trails. I was under the wrong impression that there could be an area opened only to units weighing less than 800 lbs, so thank you for the correction.</p> <p>I have been hunting in area since 1995 and the only hunters I have seen have been the same ones who hunt deer in the area every year or people who are road hunting and drive as far as they can with out getting stuck in the mud, which sometimes they don't guess correctly and they walk back to the cabin and asked to be pulled out. We have seen in the past years more damage done in the spring of the year when people are spearing fish in the creeks and take there pickups out to have some fun on the trails near by. The fall of the year some of the really wet areas that</p>

<p>19</p>	<p>always are muddy get worked a little but mostly it is the grass being packed down.</p> <p>I do not own a snowmobile but do enjoy getting out on the ATV in the winter and seeing what the deer are doing during the winter also.</p> <p>I do a fair share of walking when I am up there but never have really run into other hunters who are walking. There is a parking area when you come in from the Shotley side and go north but I have only once seen a car there during deer hunting season. My question then is who would and would this area get used much at all?</p> <p>In the area of limitation is it legal to drive ATV's at any time? We have the area just to the west of our cabin that is a walk only area already but at times I see people have driven thru it. What would this do for the people who bear hunt in that part of the woods, could they still drive in to bait the bears or not.</p> <p>I'm only asking question because it is a change and change is usually hard to except. We will work with you on whatever you decide but would prefer to be able to drive ATV's in this area north of Shotley Road Ne if possible across from our cabin.</p>
	<p>Salzl, Steve</p>
<p>20</p>	<p>I am writing to comment on the proposed Shotley "Area of Limitations" classification, because our family owns property adjacent to and hunts this area. Our family has hunted in and around this area since 1973. We have seen many changes over the years, some good and some bad. On certain weekends of the year you will find four generations of family at our camp.</p> <p>I agree with this area being managed or limited, but I do not agree with the entire Shotley area being classified as a "walking area only" for 100% of the year. I have a Brittany that I bird hunt with in this area. I do enjoy the time we spend walking and hunting in the area. We do encounter bird hunters on ATV's when we are on forest roads, but do not have to be far off the forest roads to have the area to ourselves to hunt the same birds.</p> <p>Our family has several Class 1 ATV's and would like to continue to use our ATV's during the big game season in the proposed Shotley "Area of Limitations."</p> <p>Please consider removing the "Area of Limitations" classification from the Shotley area.</p>
	<p>Stensing, Jerry (Friends of Big Bog SRA)</p>
<p>21</p>	<p>I'd be interested in seeing where the 29 miles of closed trails are located. Can you also send a map of the closed areas near saum and shotley?</p> <p>Also, am I to understand that northern beltrami county under a managed classification means ohvs may be used anywhere they currently are?</p> <p>Are there any proposed designated routes north of kelliher?</p> <p>Jerry Stensing Vice Chair Friends of Big Bog SRA</p> <hr/> <p>--- On Thu, 9/25/08, Jack Olson <Jack.Olson@dnr.state.mn.us> wrote: Mr. Stensing,</p> <p>The maps showing the proposed road and trail designations, including the 29 miles of routes that are proposed for closure are on the DNR web site at: http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/ohv/designation/no_border/red_lake.pdf Click on the link for the 'Red Lake Designation Map' to see the proposal for the Waskish and Kelliher area. If you are unable to access the DNR web site, let me know and I can mail you a CD with the plan and map files. There are also display copies of the</p>

	<p>maps at some DNR offices and there will be time to view the maps and ask questions at the public meetings in Kelliher, Warroad, and Baudette in early October.</p> <p>The attached files show the 'Areas with Limitations' on motor vehicle use surrounding the hunter walking trails near Saum and Shotley. These are areas where the hunting exceptions that allow ATV use for some big game hunting related activities such as erecting stands, travel to stands, and retrieval of big game will not apply.</p> <p>On state forest lands that are classified as managed with respect to motor vehicle use, OHVs can be used on any route that is not signed as closed. When operating a vehicle on non-designated routes on state forest land it is illegal to cause ruts, erosion, or damage to trees. Most of the state forest land in the Northern Border area, including state forest lands in northern Beltrami County, will retain its current managed classification so the only routes that will not be available for motor vehicle use will be those signed as closed (29 miles) and routes in the 'Areas with Limitations' such as those near Saum and Shotley. This plan only addresses State Forest lands. The guidelines for motor vehicle use on Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, State Recreation Areas, private lands, and Red Lake Tribal Lands are more restrictive.</p> <p>There are some designated State Forest Roads north of Kelliher but this plan will not directly result in any signed ATV trails in that area. A local ATV club has identified some routes that they would like to see signed as an ATV trail. Since their trail proposal uses highway rights-of-way and other non-State Forest lands, the trails could not be designated as part of this process.</p> <p>The proposal for road and trail designation on State Forest lands in Koochiching County is also available for public review. The links to the map for Koochiching County is on the DNR web page listed above.</p> <p>Let me know if you have additional questions or comments on the proposed classification or road/trail designation on State Forest lands.</p> <p>Jack Olson, Trail Planner MN Department of Natural Resources</p>
	<p>Thayer, Karen</p>
<p>22</p> <p>27</p> <p>23</p>	<p>I oppose designated walking trails for North Beltrami County for the following reasons:</p> <p>We already have a limited amount of ATV access trails and the proposed walking trail system would eliminate a large portion of this land. We live in an economically depressed area and the ATV riders have a greater opportunity to contribute more to our economy than walking trail hunters. Hunting season lasts for a little over one month, while ATV's can potentially be ridden all year. It would appear to be wasteful to shut down a trail system for twelve months so that they may possibly be used for one. These trails, if designated for walking hunters, would for the most part be used by only Ruff Grouse hunters. There is a ten-year cycle with Ruff Grouse and when they are in a down cycle we see very few hunters in our area. It would seem to be waste to have a large area not being used by anyone - Think of the economic loss to our area.</p> <p>If we are going to have trails designated for walking hunters only - then lets be fair and have ATV hunters only trails or are we creating two classes of people. And while I've heard walking hunters complain about vehicles using their trails, it's not something that I've heard from the vehicle hunter sharing his trail with a walking hunter. Is there a message in this scenario?</p> <p>How will the maintaining of these walking trails be paid for? I specifically pay for riding a snowmobile and ATV on trails, should a walking hunter expect to get this special treatment, to have several thousand acres tied up for only their exclusive use without some sort of cost? The majority of trails that are being proposed to be converted over to walking only, were probably built by loggers that ride ATV's and over the years been kept open by ATV riders and now they going to be designated for walking hunters that have done nothing physically or monetarily to keep these trails open for use. I propose that if the walking hunter has such a big desire to have an exclusive right to an area, that they can raise funds and build their own trail system. This would show a lot of doubters, that they are serious about the request and have the ability to develop and pay for something that would have small, seasonal usage.</p>

	<p>Our forest area in Northern Minnesota has a very limited amount of trails, but has vast amounts of land that a hunter can walk through, that is not accessible by vehicles. I was raised to believe that sharing is equal, an even trade, but to have certain areas restricted to only one type of hunter appears to put this value in jeopardy. I believe that with the walking only trails, that we would be concentrating our energies in the wrong areas, maybe we could offer compasses or GPS training classes so these walking hunters would not be scared to walk in the woods. I, personally hunt both ways and believe this world is big enough for all types of recreational use without one segment getting special treatment.</p>
	<p>Tucker, Brandon</p>
24	<p>I would like to comment on the proposed Shotley “Area of Limitations” classification within the Northern Border project area.</p> <p>I do not agree with the area being classified as a “walking area nly” for 100% of the year. I would like to see the area maintain its managed classification. We use our ATV’s responsibly and in a manner not to damage or cause erosion to the forest. We would like to continue using our ATV’s during the big game season.</p> <p>Please consider removing the “Area of Limitations” classification from the Shotley area.</p>
	<p>Waldo, Scott</p>
26	<p>This letter is in regards to the Hunter Walking trail proposal in the Shotly area in Beltrami County.</p> <p>The plan is NOT what this area needs. We need more areas for ATV’s to use, not less. Our community survives on our hunting, fishing and recreation. With the proposal of the hunter walking area you are taking away some of our recreation and our way of life. Yes, there should be a walking area that hunters can use, but closing down an entire section of our best trails to let someone walk down them for two months of the year and letting them sit, unused for the remainder is not a plan that I am comfortable with. I use those trails year round for recreational riding in the summer months, hunting in the fall with my children, and snowmobiling in the winter. Any local in the our community will tell you the same thing. The trails in Shotly are some of our best and most entertaining trails. There are already walking trails in Shotly that don’t get used. The grass is all grown up with fallen trees littering the trails making them almost impossible to navigate even on foot. Why make more of these unusable trails when they are great right now the way they are. To keep the walking trails open, the DNR will have to hire a group or individual to mow and maintain all of the trails. This will cost the tax payers more money. In the economic crisis we are all facing right now is this really the best way to spend our money? If you left the trails the way they are now, we will keep them open and passable for free. I have never seen a hunter take off into the woods with his gun and a chain saw strapped to his back. The common Atv hunter and rider will carry a saw just for that occasion a fallen tree is in the trail.</p>
25	<p>Myself and a few others have started an ATV club and are in the process of getting an approved grant-in-aid trail system. The Shotly area is one of the places we would like our trail to go through.</p> <p>I don’t think you understand what this area means to our community. It is not just a path through the woods. It’s a way of life and a place we take our children to learn about the great outdoors and teach them how to hunt and respect the land. As you can tell I am very partial to this section of land and would very much like for it to stay open to us. If the issue of wetlands is a problem then make limitations on times of year the trails will be open or some other compromise. But to close them completely would be a very big mistake and a big slap in the face to our community. Please consider a new option for this section of trails and let us continue to use the trails we have grown up on.</p>

RESPONSE TO TOPICS OF CONCERN

Related comments were grouped together into topics prior to developing an agency response. Some topics are of a general nature while others are site specific. Comments that expressed a concern or opinion but that were not directly pertinent to the classification or road/trail use designation were assigned to a miscellaneous category.

For each of the topics a succinct summary of the concerns was prepared. This is followed by a list of all the comments that were grouped under the topic (with hyperlinks to the original comments). The agency response to the topic is then presented.

Access to Private or Tribal Lands

Summary of Concerns

These comments express concerns about continued use of routes across state forest land to access private property. The Red Lake Band concern is that access routes on adjacent state forest lands may encourage unauthorized use or trespass on tribal lands.

Comments on This Topic

[03](#), [13](#)

Response to Concerns

The DNR works with the owners of lands surrounded by state forest land to provide reasonable access if the property is not accessible from public highways. In some cases the route may be designated as a forest road or left as a non-designated access route. If the route is not suitable for ongoing use by the public a permit may be issued to allow the landowner to use routes closed to the public. The private land mentioned in Comment 03 will continue to be accessible from the north (the route currently used). Some routes to the southwest of the property have been designated as Hunter Walking Trail and will not be available for motor vehicle use. Some routes to the southeast of the property will be proactively closed to motor vehicle use due to excessive rutting in the past.

The routes mentioned in the Red Lake Band comment (13) will be non-designated (access) routes on state forest land classified as *managed* with respect to motor vehicle use. These routes will not be shown on state forest user maps and will not be signed as a forest road or trail open to public use. The non-designated routes are shown on the route designation map simply to show that the route exists on the ground and that the planning team addressed the route. The disclaimer on the designation map states that tribal lands are closed to non-band members except by special authorization from the tribal council. When using non-designated routes, it is the user's responsibility to know the land ownership. The Red Lake Band could post 'no trespassing' or similar signs where the non-designated route enters tribal land.

Bear Hunting

Summary of Concerns

These comments indicate that the rules related to use of motor vehicles on state forest land while baiting bears are often misinterpreted. There is also concern about proactive closure of routes and establishment of 'Areas with Limitations.'

Comments on This Topic

[05](#), [06](#), [19](#)

Response to Concerns

The general policy as established by *MN Statutes 84.777* is that motor vehicle use on state forest lands is only allowed on roads and trails specifically designated and signed as open for use by off-highway vehicles. Vehicles may also use existing non-designated and unsigned routes on state forest lands located north of US Highway 2 and classified as *managed* with respect to motor vehicle use. The hunting and trapping exceptions established by *MN Statutes 84.926* allow use of motor vehicles on non-designated routes for certain hunting- and trapping-related activities on state forest lands classified as *managed* or *limited* with respect to motor vehicle use. Motor vehicle use for bear baiting is **not** one of the activities permitted under the hunting and trapping exceptions. It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle off of existing roads and trails while bear baiting. On *managed* state forest lands, motor vehicles can be operated on existing non-designated routes while bear baiting. It is always illegal to use a motor vehicle on any route that has been proactively closed (signed, bermed, gated) to motor vehicle use. It is also illegal

to construct an unauthorized permanent trail on state forest land. Users cannot create a 'muck hole' on any route even if it does lead to their best baiting location.

Funding for Trail Management

Summary of Concerns

Comments related to funding for maintenance of hunter walking trails.

Comments on This Topic

[04](#), [23](#)

Response to Concerns

The DNR has not uniformly maintained or enforced motor vehicle restrictions on informal hunter walking trails in the past. The DNR seeks to provide opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized recreation on state forest lands. The DNR is committed to adequately enforcing and maintaining hunter walking trails that are formally designated through the current trail designation process. Hunter walking trail management primarily involves signing or gating the routes to preclude motor vehicle use, periodic mowing and removal of deadfalls, and enforcement. Dedicated snowmobile or ATV funds have not, and will not be used to maintain hunter walking trails.

Shotley Area with Limitations

Summary of Concerns

Comments opposed to designation of the Shotley Area with Limitations.

Comments on This Topic

[01](#), [07](#), [08](#), [09](#), [10](#), [12](#), [14](#), [15](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [24](#), [25](#)

Response to Concerns

The Shotley management unit began in the mid to late 1980's and was intended as a ruffed grouse management unit with smaller than average timber harvest blocks, and walking trails. The smaller timber harvests have been implemented as a cooperative Forestry/Wildlife project. The agreement was between the District Forester, and Area Wildlife manager. One goal was to focus special management efforts here, with smaller cuts, and move closer to whole type management for other State Forest lands outside of this unit. The Area managers developed the concept of providing walking trails for ruffed grouse hunters.

There is a network of routes in this unit that provide hunter walking opportunities. Logging access created most routes. DNR - Wildlife may have contracted or dozed the original trail loop. Since creation the unit has been mowed two to three times. There were walking trail signs on the 5 gates. Many of the gates were too narrow to allow access by logging equipment and were removed to allow logging equipment access. Most have not been replaced. Due to the lack of gates and signs, motor vehicle use has continued on many routes in the area. In the early 1990's Wildlife did a maintenance/upgrade project on the township road beginning 1.5 miles east of Shotley and continuing for ½ mile to the east. This improved the access to a parking lot in the SESE 22-153-31.

The north/south section line trails have not been historically gated. Much of the unit is relatively low ground that is susceptible to OHV damage during wet times. DNR-Forestry has closed the route on the section line between sections 23 and 24 in the past, due to site damage. During winter or drought conditions, we have not re-posted the trails as closed. We do not check them regularly for activity. We typically limit travel to drought or winter windows of opportunity, when work plan projects warrant site visits. DNR-Forestry posted some of the routes in the area as closed to motor vehicle use in October 2008 due to excessive rutting following heavy rains.

The DNR acknowledges that it has not been as diligent as it should have been in maintaining the hunter walking trails and enforcing restrictions on motor vehicle use in the Shotley grouse management unit. The Shotley and Saum Hunter Walking Trails and their associated Areas with Limitations on motor vehicle use are the two areas in the entire Northern Border planning unit that will be managed specifically to provide ruffed grouse hunting on State Forest lands where the use of motor vehicles is restricted. The majority of the State Forest lands will retain the current *managed* motor vehicle use classification and almost 90% of the inventoried routes on State Forest lands will be available for motor vehicle use.

The DNR will reduce the size of the Shotley Area with Limitations by moving the west boundary of the area 1 mile east from Township Road 427 to the north-south section lines between sections 14 & 15 and 22 & 23 (Blossom Road). State Forest lands in sections 15 and 22 will no longer be part of the Area with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use. This reduces the amount of State Forest land in the Shotley Area With Limitations from about 2,520 acres to about 1,640 acres. This will maintain the motor vehicle restrictions on the routes on the interior of sections 13, 14, 23, and 24.

The DNR will also modify the proposed route designations to allow motor vehicle use along the east and west boundaries of the Shotley Areas with Limitations.

On the east side, a short segment of the route on the north-south township line between sections 19 & 24, north of the Shotley Road will be a minimum maintenance State Forest Road to allow motor vehicles to park off of Shotley Road. The north-south route on the township line north of the parking area will be left as a non-designated access route. Motor vehicles will be allowed on the access route subject to the restrictions on causing ruts, erosion, or damage to trees. This will allow motor vehicle access to lands in section 19. The routes west of the township line in section 24 will be Hunter Walking Trails and will be signed to preclude motor vehicle use.

On the west side, the route on the section line between sections 22 & 23 (Blossom Road) will be designated as a minimum maintenance State Forest Road north to the existing parking area. North of the parking area the route along the section line will be left as a non-designated access route. Motor vehicles will be allowed on the access route subject to the restrictions on causing ruts, erosion, or damage to trees. This will allow motor vehicle access to lands in sections 15 and 22. The routes east of the north-south section line will be Hunter Walking Trails and will be signed to preclude motor vehicle use.

The DNR will work with interested individuals (Comment 25) to explore grant-in-aid ATV trail opportunities. The DNR does not feel that the reduced Shotley Area with Limitations precludes ATV trail development in the broader area. The route on the north-south section line between sections 23 & 24 that was included in the group's map of potential routes will clearly not sustain ATV use on a regular basis. This route was closed to motor vehicle use in October 2008 due to excessive rutting following heavy rains. The Shotley Road or some of the access routes located south of the Shotley Road might be more suitable to provide an ATV trail through the area.

The [map](#) shows the revised Shotley Area with Limitations and the route designations.

Sprague Creek Area with Limitations

Summary of Concerns

Comments opposed to designation of the Sprague Creek Area with Limitations.

Comments on This Topic

[02, 11](#)

Response to Concerns

It was not clear if Comment 02 related to the entire Lost River State Forest or the proposed Sprague Creek Area with Limitations. The proposal would limit motor vehicle use on about 6,000 acres of the 52,000 acres of state forest land within the Lost River State Forest. Other than the existing snowmobile trail, which would remain open for snowmobile use, there are relatively few miles of existing routes on state forest land in the proposed Sprague Creek area. The terrain in the majority of the Sprague Creek area is not suitable for motor vehicle operation. There are routes on private land within the Sprague Creek area but the proposed Area with Limitations does not affect use of vehicles on private lands.

The Sprague Creek area contains one of five known spring fens in Minnesota, has several relatively undisturbed native plant communities, and rare plants, birds, and insects. The boundaries of the proposed Area with Limitations extend beyond the rare natural features of concern. The DNR uses features that are readily visible on the ground, such as highways and rivers, to define the boundaries of areas with limitations. This is done so that the public can see the area on a map and know when they are entering an area with limitations on motor vehicle use. The limitations on motor vehicle use do not apply to private lands or any non-state forest lands within the

boundary. Private land owners or those with permission from the owner could operate motor vehicles on private lands within the area with limitations. They could not legally operate vehicles on state forest lands within the area with limitations.

Areas with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use are intended to protect sensitive or rare natural features or to provide non-motorized recreation opportunities. The DNR recognizes that Areas with Limitations may not be consistent with nearby residents' desires for use of state forest lands. The DNR considers public preferences while developing and ecologically sustainable and socially acceptable approach to management of recreational and utilitarian access to state forest lands. There are widely varying values and expectations related to the use of public forest lands and recreational motor vehicles. In our diverse society there is no public access management scheme that will fully satisfy all interests. The DNR will designate the Sprague Creek Area with Limitations as proposed in the public review draft plan.

Miscellaneous

Summary of Concerns

These comments express a concern or opinion that is not directly pertinent to the forest classification or road/trail designation decisions that are the subject of this planning effort.

Comments on This Topic

[26, 27](#)

Response to Concerns

Comments noted.

ADDENDUM TO PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT PLAN

Larson Lake Area with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use

The DNR's proposal to designate the Larson Lake Area with Limitations surrounding the Larson Lake Natural Heritage Registry Site was inadvertently omitted from the public review draft plan dated July 25, 2008. The DNR issued Addendum #1 dated October 1, 2008 to add the proposal to the draft plan. The oversight was discussed at the public review meetings held in October 2008 and the public was asked to comment on the Larson Lake area if they had concerns. The DNR received no written comments on the Larson Lake area.

The Larson Lake Area with Limitations on Motor Vehicle Use, as proposed in Addendum #1, will be designated in the Commissioner's Order on State Forest Classification.