

Cook County - Tom Lake Area All-Terrain Vehicle Grant-in-Aid Trail Proposal Summary

Sponsor: Cook County

Proposer: Cook County
Cook County ATV Club

Project Location: Grand Portage State Forest, Cook County, Minnesota
T63N, R3E, Sections 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 22, 21, 24, 25, 26, 35, & 36

Project Dimensions: Total length = 16 miles, including:
4 miles on Boyd Road, an existing forest route/abandoned road bed
0.5 miles on the abandoned road bed/forest access route to Stevens Lake
11.5 miles on Irish Creek Road and Tom Lake Road, state forest system and minimum maintenance roads

Project Description: This proposal would establish a 16-mile long grant-in-aid (GIA) all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trail in the Grand Portage State Forest. The trail is located on forest access routes, and state forest minimum maintenance and system roads; the entire length is currently open to ATV use.

Cook County is the sponsor for the trail proposal and has agreed that the trail will be multi-use and open to ATVs, horses, mountain bikes, hiking, hunting, skiing, snowmobiling, and dog-sledding. This trail system was designated for ATV use during the DNR's forest classification and forest road and trail designation process for state forest lands in Cook County, effective September 2008.

The ATV trail will use existing DNR forest system roads, minimum maintenance roads and forest access routes in the Tom Lake Area, including the Boyd Road, Irish Creek Road, and Tom Lake Road. No easements across private property will be needed.

The Boyd Road was originally built in the late 1930s to salvage timber after wildfires destroyed most of the large tracts of timber in the area. The road was maintained for timber access until 1973. Since that time, the Boyd Road has been user-maintained for hunting, fishing access to Stevens Lake, snowmobiling, ATV use, and dog-sledding.

In August 2012, the DNR made a number of improvements to the Boyd Road to increase sustainability of the route. Improvements included new culverts, a lift on the old roadbed, ditching, and erosion control. Additional work is planned during summer of 2013, including two new bridges across the Swamp River. These improvements will help stabilize and protect the treadway surface and roadbed. The route will be graded and brushed periodically to reduce the encroachment of woody vegetation and provide for improved safety.

Specific site-level design, construction, and maintenance will be in accordance with the principles outlined in the DNR publication "*Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines*", including best management practices for trail construction. The necessary permits for water crossings, wetlands,

and road right-of-way use have been completed. The wetlands along this system have been delineated, wetland permits completed, and wetland credits purchased to mitigate wetland impacts resulting from construction.

Operations, maintenance, and monitoring:

The system will be operated, maintained, and managed by Cook County, with assistance and support provided by the Cook County ATV Club. Members of the club will accomplish most of the ongoing maintenance. Up to 90% of the maintenance costs will be eligible for reimbursement through the Minnesota Trail Assistance (grant-in-aid) program. The sponsor, the club, and the DNR will share monitoring responsibilities. The system will continue to function as a forest access route for other users of the Grand Portage State Forest. Dog sledding and snowmobiling will remain as the primary winter uses.

Project Need and Beneficiaries:

Since 1973, the Boyd Road has been used as a multi-use route. Little or no formal maintenance has been performed since the DNR stopped maintaining the road for timber access. This multi-use facility will provide a managed riding opportunity, and better access to the Hovland/Irish Creek area for ATVs, horses, mountain bikes, hiking, hunting, skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and dog-sledding.

Extending grant-in-aid status to this route will provide the ATV club with funding to improve and maintain the trail. Funding will also be used for route signing and printing trail maps.

Beneficiaries of this proposal include Cook County residents and visitors, ATV riders, horse riders, mountain bikers, hikers, skiers, snowmobilers, dog-sledders, hunters and others who enjoy using the trail.

Public Review: The DNR invites public comment on the proposal from January 21 to February 25, 2013. Copies of the proposal, including a map, are available on the DNR website, (<http://www.mndnr.gov/input>), and at the DNR office in Two Harbors.

Written comments on the proposal may be e-mailed to Kevin.G.Johnson@state.mn.us, faxed to 218-834-6639, or mailed to Kevin Johnson, Assistant Area Supervisor, DNR Parks and Trails, 1568 Hwy 2, Two Harbors, MN 55616. For more information, or to request a printed copy of the proposal, please call Kevin Johnson at 218-834-1431 or the DNR Information Center at 1-888-MINNDNR (toll free).

Comments will be accepted until 4:30pm on Monday, February 25, 2013.