

Project Brief: Roseau County Camping Opportunities for Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Riders

Project Background

- The DNR identified a need to provide high-quality, semi-modern facilities for off-highway vehicle (OHV) campers within the vicinity of Beltrami Island State Forest (BISF) and Hayes Lake State Park.
- DNR considered 6 sites, including areas within Hayes Lake State Park and Beltrami Island State Forest.
- OHV operation within a state park is prohibited by rule (M.R. 6100.1900). Therefore, if a site within Hayes Lake were identified, a designation change and master plan amendment would be needed.

Public Process

- The DNR used a public engagement process to determine amenities desired by campers with OHVs and review potential sites; this included examination of 6 potential sites for a campground.
- This process included a 30-day comment period from November 26 to December 27, 2018. Comments were received via email, U.S. mail, an online comment form and public meetings. The online and public meeting comment forms contained several questions to determine the amenities desired by campers with OHVs. The DNR received a total of 1,387 comments during the public input session (224, or 17%, of commenters were from 20 “local” ZIP codes).
- The DNR hosted two public meetings, one in Warroad (12/10/2018) and one in St. Paul (12/13/2018).
- Factors considered in the evaluation included: 1) ability to perform site maintenance; 2) ability to provide for other recreational uses; 3) ability to provide amenities desired in public comments; 4) connection with OHV trails; 5) access to day use facilities; 6) ability to provide amenities with existing infrastructure; 7) feasibility of providing power; 8) potential impacts to natural features; 9) potential impacts to wetlands; and 10) site security concerns.

Key Findings

- **The most desired amenities for OHV campers were:** running water, fire rings, showers, larger campsites for RVs and trucks with trailers, and electrical hook ups. Also important: easy access to OHV trails.
- **75% of ATV respondents did not care where the facilities were located specifically,** but just wanted better facilities in proximity to the BISF trails. Some commenters desire development of the Clear River site due to its location on a significant roadway and its proximity to the BISF trails. Some indicated that Minnesota lacks the OHV camping opportunities that are available in other states.
- **Concerns about allowing OHVs within the state park included:** noise, exhaust (“pollution”), environmental impacts, and displacement of campers seeking solitude.
- **Hayes Lake campground would require costly redevelopment that might not meet everyone’s needs.** The small campground would need to accommodate larger camping units and towing OHV trailers. Such a redesign of campsites and loop turning radius will reduce the number of campsites available by about half. Campground expansion is not possible at this site due to the lake, wetlands, and sensitive plant communities. Redevelopment of the Hayes Lake campground would cost \$2.5-\$4.0 million.
- **Increasing occupancy at Hayes Lake:** During peak season, *electric* sites are 88% occupied on weekends vs 42% of *non-electric* sites. These data suggest that electrifying the campground may be a more cost effective investment to increase occupancy than re-designing to accommodate OHV trailers.
- **Early concept designs for a Clear River campground estimate** the development cost at \$2.0-\$3.0 million. This estimate would include larger sites and desired amenities, such as a pre-fabricated shower house and electrical sites.

Site Considerations

Site	Benefits	Drawbacks
Site 1-Within Hayes Lake, north of County Road 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to ATV trails, including BISF, north of the park • Electrical facilities near-by; easy access from county road • Higher, dryer ground • Near other facilities; easy access to maintain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No existing facilities • Area contains many sensitive plant communities • Designation change required to allow OHV travel within park boundaries
Site 2-Existing Hayes Lake campground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing campground with water, electric, sewer and showers • Potential access to River Forest Road via old River Forest Road • Easy access from park entrance • Near other facilities; easy access to maintain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current sites are small for larger RVs/campers, requiring redesign • Due to sensitive plant communities, wetlands and lake, redevelopment limited to the existing footprint; reduction of about half the sites • Homes on River Forest Road do not want additional traffic on the road • Designation change required to allow OHV travel within park boundaries
Site 3-Former Hayes Lake group camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old group camp with the ability to expand • Existing facilities include a hand pump well and pit toilet • No sensitive plant communities or wetlands in campground • Access to other park facilities • Access to BISF trails by constructing trail via River Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access road to the site requires significant upgrades for expanded use • Electrical service ends approximately 1.5 miles from the site • Connection to River Forest Road would be difficult due to LUP/wetlands • Homes on River Forest Road do not want additional traffic on the road • Designation change required to allow OHV travel within park boundaries
Site 4-River Road area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edge of park providing easy access to state forest trail system • Easy electrical connection due to existing power lines • High, dry location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No existing facilities • Area contains many sensitive plant communities • Homes on River Forest Road do not want additional traffic on the road • Designation change required to allow OHV travel within Park boundaries
Site 4A-Along Hayes Lake State Park road (added later)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential access to River Forest Road via old River Forest Road • Easy electrical connection due to existing power lines • High, dry location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No existing facilities • Access road to the site requires significant upgrades for expanded use • Area contains many sensitive plant communities • Homes on River Forest Road do not want additional traffic on the road • Designation change required to allow OHV travel within Park boundaries
Site 5-Bemis Hill Forest Recreation Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing campground and day use facility with campsites, pit toilets, a hand pump well and an enclosed picnic area • OHVs may currently access the campground • Easy access to the state forest trail system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No electric/showers; electric ends approximately 7.5 miles from site • Some concern in comments about displacing current users at the site • No asphalt road connections for travel trailers/campers
Site 6-Clear River Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access to facilities in Warroad • Central to OHV trail system • Site has some facilities, such as a well and picnic tables • DNR has a conceptual design for an OHV campground on site • Ample space to design larger spots desired by OHV campers • No designation change required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No electric at the site; electric available approximately 1.5-2.0 miles away • Most distant from Hayes Lake, which would manage the unit • Portions of land are in the Land Utilization Plan (LUP); DNR and the USFWS are currently in the process of exchanging these parcels