

Beltrami Island State Forest/Hayes Lake State Park Camping Opportunities Review

Background Information

Hayes Lake State Park, located in Roseau County, was established in 1967 to provide recreational opportunities in a wilderness setting. Current opportunities include camping, hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, non-motorized boating, fishing, and swimming. The principal feature of the park is Hayes Lake, a 182-acre impoundment of the Roseau River. From 2014 to August 2018, the park averaged an annual attendance of 26,406 visitors.

Beltrami Island State Forest is a 703,000-acre working forest surrounding Hayes Lake State Park. Recreation activities within Beltrami Island include camping, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, mountain biking, off-highway vehicle riding, snowmobiling, and wildlife watching. There are more than 238 miles of OHV trails within Beltrami Island State Forest. The Bemis Hill Forest Recreation Area (FRA) is also managed by Hayes Lake State Park and contains camping, day use, winter recreation, and non-motorized recreation facilities.

What is the DNR considering?

The DNR understands there is demand for additional facilities for off-highway vehicle (OHV) camping in the Hayes Lake/Beltrami Island area. This effort seeks to better understand what OHV campers desire and how the DNR can accommodate these desires. The DNR is also interested in understanding the public perception of permitting limited OHV access to portions of Hayes Lake State Park.

What is an OHV?

Off-highway vehicles, or OHVs, are motorized vehicles that are designed to be driven off roadways. In Minnesota, OHVs fall into three categories:

- All-terrain vehicles, or ATVs, which are OHVs with three to six low pressure tires, a dry weight of 2,000 pounds or less and a total width of 65 inches or less. ATVs do not include golf carts, mini-trucks, dune buggies, or go carts.
- Off-highway motorcycles, or OHMs, are two-wheeled OHVs designed to be straddled by the operator and handlebars for steering control.
- Off-road vehicles, or ORVs, are OHVs that are capable of cross-country travel on natural-surface roads or trails.

OHVs do not include snowmobiles. Some OHMs and ORVs may also be registered as highway-licensed vehicles (HLVs).

Where can OHV users currently camp?

OHV campers may currently camp in the Hayes Lake State Park campground as long as they do not ride their OHV in the park, meaning their OHVs must be trailered in and out of the park. OHV campers may also utilize the three state forest campgrounds in Beltrami Island State Forest: Bemis Hill, Blueberry Hill, and Faunce. OHV campers may ride their OHV directly from their campsite at the state forest campgrounds, but these campgrounds provide limited services compared to the campground at Hayes Lake State Park. Finally, OHV campers may disperse camp anywhere in Beltrami Island State Forest.

Why can't OHVs currently use their OHVs in Hayes Lake State Park?

Hayes Lake is designated as a state park under the Outdoor Recreation Act (M.S. 86A.05). Under State Park Rules, only highway-licensed vehicles may be operated within a state park (M.R. 6100.1900). Therefore, OHVs may not operate within Hayes Lake as the rules currently stand. If, through this public review process, it is determined that permitting OHV use within Hayes Lake is the most viable option to provide OHV camping, the area where OHVs would be permitted to operate must be reclassified as a separate recreation unit within the state park (i.e., a "secondary unit" inside the park boundaries). This reclassification would require a master plan amendment for the park, as well as some legislation to amend the designation status.

What facilities are currently provided at Hayes Lake State Park and the surrounding forest recreation areas?

Hayes Lake State Park currently provides visitors with running water, showers, flush toilets, and 18, 30-amp electrical campsites. Hayes Lake State Park also includes lake access, a swimming beach, picnic areas, and non-motorized trails. The state forest campgrounds within Beltrami Island State Forest provide a variety of amenities, but all include designated campsites, vault or pit toilets, and a well.

What is the process? What is the end product? How long should it take?

The DNR is beginning this process by gathering public input through listening sessions and a public comment period. The DNR will hold two listening sessions in December, 2018 as well as a comment period that will help us understand the desires for OHV camping opportunities in the Beltrami Island/Hayes Lake area. The DNR will develop a recommendation for OHV camping based on the input gleaned during the listening sessions and comment period. This recommendation should be completed by February, 2019. If developing OHV camping facilities in the state park is recommended, a master plan amendment will be developed. The master plan amendment process is a public process that usually takes about 6-8 months to complete. Once the amendment process is complete, the designation of the affected areas within the park will need to be changed through legislation to reflect the new use.

How do I get more information? How do I comment?

You may get more information by reviewing the [project web site](#), contacting Hayes Lake State Park (218-425-7504), or attending one of the listening sessions. Comments may be submitted by using the online comment form found on the website; emailing joe.unger@state.mn.us; faxing attn.: Joe Unger, 651-297-1157; or mailing Joe Unger, Parks and Trails, 500 Lafayette Rd., St. Paul, MN 55155. Comments will be accepted until December 27, 2018.