

Prairie Smoke Dunes SNA Public Access Enhancement Assessment

Project Purpose

Provide enhanced access to the Prairie Smoke Dunes Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) while maintaining consistency with SNA rules and regulations.

Summary of Work Completed

DNR met with Norman County Board of Commissioners on Oct 19, 2017 and leaving the meeting agreed to conduct an assessment of access improvement options. Since that time DNR had several communications with adjacent landowners, a County commissioner, and have put together costs and exhibits (below and attached). The criteria used to assess options included:

- Cannot travel/trespass on private property and must be agreeable to adjacent landowners
- Should provide access enhancement
- Amending the Designation Order is an option if needed
- Options must be consistent with SNA rules, regulations, and unit management (Prairie Smoke Dunes SNA Designation, Commissioners SNA Order 175, MS 86A.05, Subd. 5, MR 6136) (e.g. 6136.0550 Restricted Uses and Acts Subp1 G. operation of a bicycle or motorized vehicle, except in designated parking areas)
- Cost effectiveness
- Need to address the MN DOT encroachment issue

Overall Conclusion:

Each alternative reviewed can provide different degrees of access enhancement but would also have varying impacts to adjacent landowners and have different requirements and costs.

Next Steps

1. The County Board should gain consensus with landowners and provide a Board resolution to DNR requesting any changes in SNA use based on the Alternatives presented below.
2. If the requested alternative requires an amendment to the designation order, we will have a public hearing. The final decision will be made by the Commissioner after the hearing.

Assessment of Access Improvements

Alternative	Costs	Effectiveness at Meeting Purpose	Impacts and Requirements
<p>1 - Near MNDOT Approach Hwy 32</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking lot construction-\$2,500 • Gate relocation-\$2,500 • Fence realignment-\$1000 • Signage-\$500 <p>Total \$6,500</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides additional parking area but no additional travel into northern edge of SNA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal impacts to adjacent landowner. <p>Private fencing along MN DOT ROW</p>
<p>2 - 240 feet west of Option 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking lot construction-\$2,500 • Gate relocation-\$2,500 • Fence relocation - \$1840 • Road Improvements - \$1,000 • Signage-\$500 <p>Total \$8,340</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides additional 240 feet vehicular access into northern edge of SNA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs to construct and maintain infrastructure increase. • Requires amendment to Designation Order. • More impacts to adjacent landowner. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Private fencing along MN DOT ROW. ○ Some disruption of current road use
<p>3 - Move gate and develop new parking area ¼ mile in. Gate and fence would keep public on public property.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking lot construction-\$2,500, gate relocation-\$2,500 • Fence relocation - \$3000 • Road improvements = \$8,000 • Signage-\$500 <p>Total \$16,500</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides ~1/4 mile of vehicular access into northern edge of SNA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires amendment to Designation Order. • Most impacts to adjacent landowners*. <p><i>*Avoiding impacts would require more significant road widening to the</i></p>

Alternative	Costs	Effectiveness at Meeting Purpose	Impacts and Requirements
			<i>south and additional gate/gates.</i>
4 - SW Corner of SNA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking lot construction-\$2,500, • Fence realignment needed-\$1000, • Signage-\$500. <p>Total \$4,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to new area • Does not increase access along northern edge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowest cost if no additional access changes are needed. • Adjacent landowner will need to be consulted. • Would not need amended Designation Order
5 - NW Corner of SNA (A parking lot area is already developed on the Watershed District property, and a visitor would need to walk approx. 600 ft to get into SNA from that lot)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not calculated given reasons in considerations & comments sections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to new area • Does not increase access along northeastern edge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landowner permission needed • May need an amended Designation Order

Additional Consideration:

- Gate needs to be moved off MNDOT property regardless of project
- New signage and/or fencing may be needed along surveyed property line regardless of project
- The existing road has an average width of approximately 16 feet
- Existing road surface is on public and private property and shifting to public property would require shifting of the road approximately 5-6 feet to the south.
- Adjacent landowner have been accustomed to using the current road and fencing/signing the actual property line will impact travel of historical roadbed.