

# Frequently Asked Questions: Trail Review of the Fond du Lac State Forest.

## What is this project?

In 2007, the DNR completed a forest classification and road/trail designation for the Fond du Lac State Forest. This first process, commonly referred to as “Phase 1,” classified the forest as “limited” for recreational motor vehicle use. A limited classification means off-highway vehicles (OHVs) may use only forest roads and trails designated to be open for their use. Trails were also designated during Phase 1, but the DNR was limited to reviewing only existing routes. The DNR made a commitment to come back and review the designation made during Phase 1 and is now fulfilling that commitment. This project is only reviewing trail designations and will *not* change the limited classification.

## What is included? What is not included?

Motorized and non-motorized trails are included in this project. Motorized trails include all-terrain vehicles (ATV), Off-highway motorcycles (OHM) and off-road vehicles (ORV). Non-motorized trails include a variety of other trail uses, such as cross-country ski and hunter walking trails. The DNR may also designate areas where the hunter-trapper exemptions do not apply. Roads, campgrounds, snowmobile trails and changes to the forest classification are not included in this review.

## What trails currently exist within Fond du Lac State Forest?

The forest currently contains approximately 37 miles of motorized trails. Many of these trails create loops for recreational riding while other trails serve important access for hunters, trappers and a variety of other forest uses. Fond du Lac State Forest also hosts approximately 18 miles of cross-country ski trails and 11 miles of hunter walking trails<sup>1</sup>. All trails are open to non-motorized use such as hiking and hunting.

## Who manages the land within Fond du Lac State Forest?

The DNR Division of Forestry manages most of the land within the state forest. Carlton and St. Louis County also manage land public lands within the forest. The Fond du Lac Band of Ojibway also manages land within the boundaries of the Fond du Lac Reservation. Other lands within the forest are privately owned.

## What are the benefits of designated trails?

Designation allows the DNR to fund trails for maintenance, signage and mapping. In addition, within limited forests such as Fond du Lac, OHVs must stay on roads and designated trails only.

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<sup>1</sup> The hunter walking trail miles includes trails within the Kettle Lake Wildlife Management Area, which is within the boundaries of the Fond du Lac State Forest.

## How are the trails funded? How are they maintained?

Designated OHV trails are funded through the dedicated OHV accounts. Money in these accounts comes from OHV registration fees and a portion of the unrefunded state gas tax. The DNR may also work with local clubs who may be interested to add the new trails to the Grant-in-Aid System. Non-motorized trails may have dedicated funding accounts or be funded through general appropriation money. The current trail OHV system within the Fond du Lac State Forest is maintained through a partnership between DNR-Parks and Trails and local clubs. Cross-country ski trails are maintained by local volunteers.

## What are the desired outcomes for this project?

The DNR has developed a set of general desired outcomes for Phase 2 projects. The desired outcomes include:

- Closing unsustainable trails;
- Connect trails to other destinations and local communities;
- Provide for a variety of experience levels;
- Provide for a variety of uses-both motorized and non-motorized;
- Avoid ecologically sensitive areas; and
- Address major safety concerns and user conflicts.

## How will the public be involved?

The DNR values public input throughout this process. During an initial 30-day scoping period, we encourage members of the public to submit your comments, ideas and suggestions to the DNR. The DNR will also work with local stakeholder groups such as user groups, local governments and local tribal representatives to identify trail revisions. Once a draft plan is completed, there will be a 60-day public review period followed by a public meeting where you may submit comments on the proposed changes. All public input will be read and considered.

## What guidance does the DNR to Layout the trails?

The DNR's [Trail Planning, Design and Development Guidelines](#) manual provides trail construction information for all trails, the National Off-Highway Conservation Council's [Great Trails](#) manual provides trail construction information for OHV. Use of these manuals helps guide trail designers to develop trails that are environmentally sustainable, which are also more cost effective to maintain and typically more enjoyable for the user. Trails will be routed to avoid sensitive environmental areas whenever possible. If a trail must cross a sensitive environmental area, appropriate measures will be taken to reduce the impact to the area.

Before designation, all proposed trails will be subject to a rigorous DNR interdisciplinary review. This will include checking trails against the National Heritage Information System (NHIS) data for potential conflicts with state listed threatened and endangered species, field checks where necessary and, if necessary, formal environmental review.

## Additional questions/comments?

For additional information, please contact Joe Unger, OHV Planner, Parks and Trails Division, MN Department of Natural Resources at 651-259-5279 or [joe.unger@state.mn.us](mailto:joe.unger@state.mn.us) or Mary Straka, Area Supervisor at 218-460-7024 or [mary.straka@state.mn.us](mailto:mary.straka@state.mn.us).

Comments may be submitted to Joe Unger, Parks and Trails Division, 500 Lafayette Rd, St. Paul, MN 55155, or email to [foresttrailplanning.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:foresttrailplanning.dnr@state.mn.us).