

Frequently Asked Questions: Trail Review of the Hay Creek, Kruger and Zumbro Bottoms Management Units of the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest.

What is this project?

In 2008, the DNR completed a forest classification and road/trail designation for the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest (RJD). 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 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.

Why are you only doing part of the forest? Will the other management units be reviewed?

Stretching from the south Metro to the Iowa border, the RJD is one of the largest state forests in Minnesota by statutory boundary. For recreational use, the forest is divided into 11 management units, which are concentrated tracts of DNR managed land. Because of the large size and management structure of the Forest, dividing Phase 2 into smaller, more manageable projects will help the projects move more efficiently. Other units of the Dorer will also be reviewed at a later date.

What trails were designated during Phase 1?

Over 180 miles of trails was designated during Phase 1 within the RJD. This includes horse, mountain bike, ski and off-highway vehicle trails. The table below highlights the miles of trail for the three management units under review.

Trail Type	Zumbro Bottoms (miles)	Hay Creek (miles)	Kruger (miles)
Horse	44	14.5	5.3
Mountain Bike	--	--	7.5
Hike and Ski	44	14.5	7.5
Horse-no bike	44	14.5	--
Mtn. Bike-no horse	--	--	2.2
Accessible	--	--	.75

Why start with these units?

Several factors went in to determining what units of the RJD to review first. Trail mileage, use and demand are determining factors the DNR uses to decide the location of a trail review project. Geographic location and similar uses help the DNR decide what units to group together. Zumbro Bottoms contains one of the largest and most heavily used trail systems in the State. Hay Creek and Kruger are near-by and contain similar trail uses.

What are the benefits of designated trails?

Designation ensures the trail will receive funding for maintenance, signage and mapping. In addition, within the RJD, horses, mountain bikes and OHVs must stay on designated trails only.

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.

What resources are used to Layout the trails?

The DNR uses many resources to ensure trails are coincide with the environment. The DNR's Trail Planning, Design and Development Guidelines manual provides trail construction information for all trails, the National Off-Highway Conservation Counsel's Great Trails manual provides trail construction information for OHV trails and the US Forest Service's Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads and Campgrounds provides information for horse trails. 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 taking 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 or Jess Althoff, Area Supervisor at 507-206-2845 or jess.althoff@state.mn.us.

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